

INTELLIGENCE FAILURE IN KOREA: MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES A.
WILLOUGHBY'S ROLE IN THE UNITED NATIONS COMMAND'S
DEFEAT IN NOVEMBER, 1950

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Military History

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

INTELLIGENCE FAILURE IN KOREA, by MAJ Justin M. Haynes, 144 pages

In November, 1950, the United States Army suffered one of its most devastating defeats ever, in the frozen mountains of North Korea at the hands of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. This defeat fundamentally changed the nature of the Korean War, from a near-certain United Nations victory into a fight for its very survival. It was, however, avoidable.

This Chinese victory was partially the result of one of the most glaring failures in U.S. military intelligence history. The officer most responsible for this failure was the Far East Command Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G2), Major General Charles Andrew Willoughby. His inaccurate intelligence picture contributed to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's flawed understanding of the nature of the Chinese Communist intent.

Charles Willoughby correctly identified the potential threat of a Chinese Communist intervention in Korea in late 1950, yet failed to acknowledge the significance of China's strategic warnings, operational preparations for war and tactical confirmation of their intentions. Willoughby's flawed assessment of Chinese intentions in the fall of 1950 was a result of rampant mirror imaging, complicated by circular analysis stemming from his exclusive control over intelligence reporting on the Korean theater. His significant personal prejudices against the Chinese ability fight exacerbated this problem. Once the United Nations Command undeniably confirmed that Chinese forces had entered North Korea, he minimized their significance in order to support MacArthur's final offensive to the Yalu River in late November, ultimately resulting in the defeat of his command.

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I'd like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Stephen Bourque, Dr. Jonathan House and Mr. William Latham for providing continuous encouragement and advice throughout my research and writing. Their efforts have significantly impacted my ability to process massive amounts of data, conduct thorough analysis and provide a coherent final product. Their varying points of view and vast experience provided excellent sources of knowledge and ideas that enabled me to complete this project. If Charles Willoughby had sought out such sage counsel in the fall of 1950, the United Nations Command may have avoided defeat in the frozen mountains of North Korea.

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ACRONYMS

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FEC	Far East Command
G2	Intelligence Section
GHQ	General Headquarters
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PLA	People's Liberation Army
ROK	Republic of Korea
SITREP	Situation Report
T/Intel	Tactical Intelligence Division
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sergeant Pappy Miller of the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, understood the importance of the information that the Korean farmer before him was conveying. Miller, a combat veteran of World War II and the fighting in Korea since the dark days of July, believed that the old man was telling the truth. On this day, the last day of October, 1950, the 8th Cavalry Regiment was poised at the lead edge of the United Nations Command advance into North Korea near the village of Unsan, only sixty-five miles from the Manchurian frontier. Sergeant Miller brought the farmer to the battalion command post to tell his story first-hand: Chinese soldiers, *thousands of Chinese soldiers*, some on horses, were waiting in the hills north of Unsan. The response shocked the experienced veteran: no one in the headquarters seemed interested in the report; nothing was done. David Halberstam chronicled the sergeant's reaction: "Well, Miller thought, they were the intelligence experts. *They ought to know.*"¹

Two nights later, two divisions of the Communist Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) savaged the 8th Cavalry Regiment in a nighttime battle that forced the Eighth United States Army to go on the defensive for the first time since September. This battle represented the last opportunity for the Commander of the United States Far East Command (FEC), General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and his senior intelligence officer, Major General Charles A. Willoughby, to make the assessment that China had entered the Korean War on a decisive scale.

In November, 1950, the United States Army suffered one of its most devastating defeats ever, in the frozen mountains of North Korea at the hands of the PLA. This

defeat fundamentally changed the nature of the Korean War, from a near-certain United Nations victory into a fight for its very survival. It was, however, avoidable. Despite overwhelming evidence that the new Communist Chinese state was poised to enter the war, MacArthur and Willoughby ignored the evidence. Instead, MacArthur continued his attempt to destroy the North Korean Army and unify the Korean Peninsula.

This Chinese victory was partially the result of one of the most glaring failures in U.S. military intelligence history. The officer most responsible for this failure was the FEC Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G2), Major General Charles Andrew Willoughby. His inaccurate intelligence picture contributed to General MacArthur's flawed understanding of the nature of the Chinese Communist intent. Willoughby's actions also had significant second and third order effects on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as the President, compounding errors made at the national, strategic level. The grim fate that awaited the Soldiers and Marines of the Eighth United States Army and X Corps was the result of informational, institutional, and personality factors that distorted Willoughby's judgment and effectiveness.

On June 25, 1950, Kim Il Sung's 135,000 man North Korean People's Army (NKPA) rolled across the 38th Parallel and smashed into the poorly trained and equipped army of the Republic of Korea. Equipped with Soviet armor and artillery, the North Koreans swiftly captured Seoul, overwhelming the South Koreans. Within days, President Harry S. Truman committed the United States to the defense of the South. The United States military initially committed combat aircraft and warships, followed by the hasty movement of ground combat forces from Japan to bolster the collapsing ROK Army.²

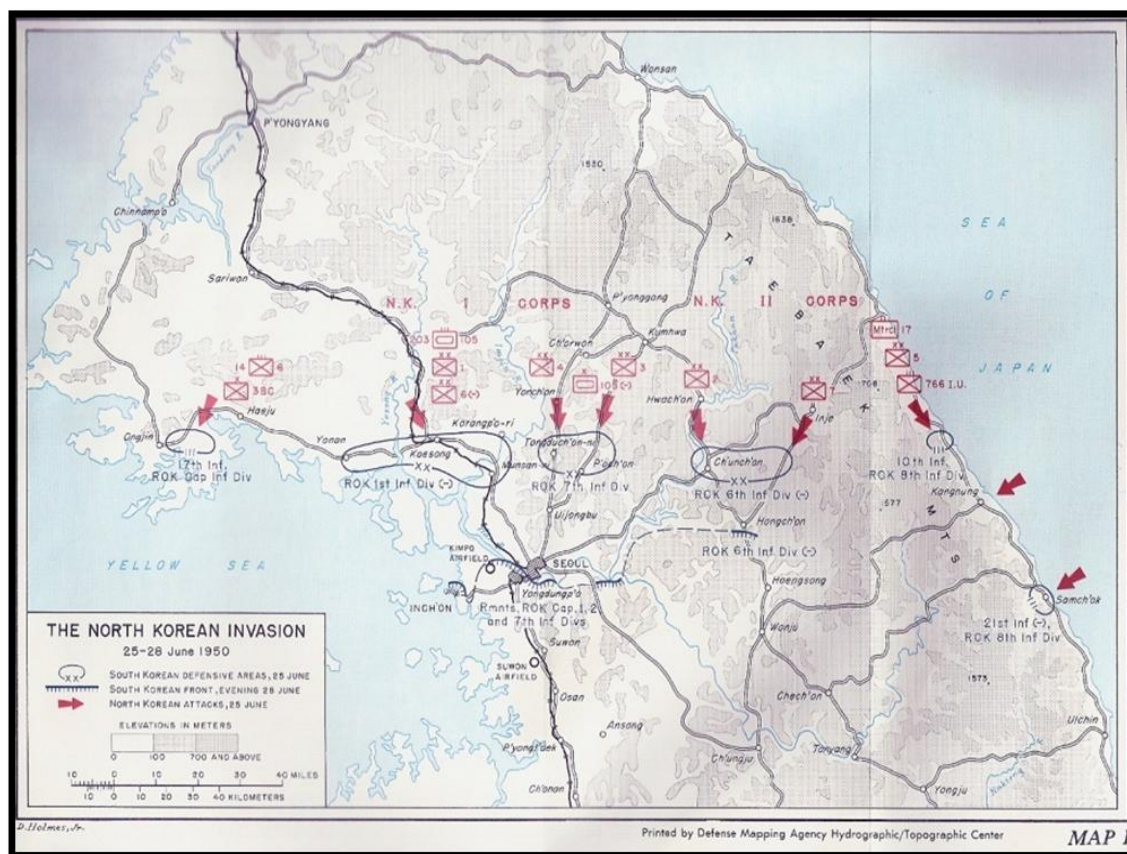


Figure 1. North Korea Invasion

Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986),

On the morning of July 5, a combined arms organization built upon 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, commanded by LTC Charles B. Smith, prepared to meet the rapidly advancing North Korean spearhead near Osan, approximately thirty miles south of Seoul. MacArthur had rushed Smith's task force to Korea from occupation duties in Japan to provide an initial American combat force while the 24th Infantry Division prepared to move to the peninsula. In the ensuing battle, North Korean armor and infantry units devastated Task Force Smith, forcing its survivors to flee to the south in disarray. Rather than demonstrating America's resolve to face down Communist

aggression, this debacle highlighted the United States' total unpreparedness for the long war to follow.³

Over the next month, United States and Republic of Korea Army units fought unsuccessfully to stem the Communist onslaught. After losing the pivotal city of Taejon on July 20, the Americans and their South Korean allies established a defensive line anchored on the Naktong River, better known as the Pusan Perimeter. As the U.S. rushed forces from their occupation garrisons in Japan to stop the North Korean attack, General MacArthur planned an amphibious counteroffensive that would cut off the communist forces from their supply lines to North Korea and force a rapid conclusion to the war.

Since the earliest days of the conflict, MacArthur envisioned a grand amphibious envelopment to turn its tide.⁴ He firmly believed that Inchon was the point where he must strike his decisive blow.⁵ MacArthur fell back on his extensive use of amphibious assaults during World War II as the best form of operational maneuver to avoid his adversary's strengths and strike where the enemy was most vulnerable. Despite significant efforts to convince the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) of his plan, MacArthur faced resistance to striking at Inchon.⁶ The Inchon operation siphoned valuable resources away from the Eighth United States Army that was fighting for its life within the Pusan Perimeter. Even key members of his own staff, most notably his lead naval planner, Admiral James Doyle, harbored significant doubts about the Inchon landings.⁷ MacArthur and his staff eventually persuaded the JCS to support the Inchon landings, Operation Chromite, which occurred on September 15. Within days of the X Corps' landings at Inchon, the Eighth Army attacked across the Naktong River and drove north in an attempt to complete the destruction of the NKPA south of the 38th Parallel. The

success at Inchon and subsequent breakout of the Eighth Army from the Pusan Perimeter vindicated MacArthur and his inner circle and insulated them from perceived naysayers who would warn them of dangers in the future.

In his success at Inchon, MacArthur headed on a path that would lead to his army's defeat two months later in North Korea.⁸ Journalist-historian David Halberstam argued: "The more successful the United States was in the South, the harder it was to set limits going north."⁹ MacArthur and his inner circle shunned those who spoke out against the landings at Inchon, to include the Eighth Army commander, Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker. A prime example of this pettiness occurred when MacArthur ignored Walker when he met with his generals on the Korean peninsula at Kimpo airfield shortly after Eighth Army linked up with X Corps in late September. Halberstam observed that this example clearly demonstrated that those who had supported Chromite would be rewarded, while those who had opposed it would be shunned due to their perceived lack of loyalty to MacArthur's vision.¹⁰ This environment benefited those who blindly supported MacArthur's objectives and punished officers who thought differently. Charles Willoughby's loyalty to MacArthur throughout the Chromite planning ensured that he would retain his position within MacArthur's inner circle, continuing his influence in the FEC commander's decision making. With President Truman concurring, MacArthur pushed his forces north across the 38th Parallel.

By late November 1950, two geographically separated American forces, the Eighth Army and X Corps, augmented by their South Korean allies, were arrayed on the Chongchon River in the west and at the Chosin Reservoir in the east of North Korea. These soldiers and Marines were weary after over five months of heavy fighting. After

UN forces pursued the fleeing remnants of the North Korean Army across the 38th Parallel into the rugged mountains north of Pyongyang, the end of the war seemed imminent. MacArthur set the date for his final offensive to commence on November 24. However, the operation had barely begun when a massive Chinese Communist counteroffensive shattered hopes for an early end to the war.

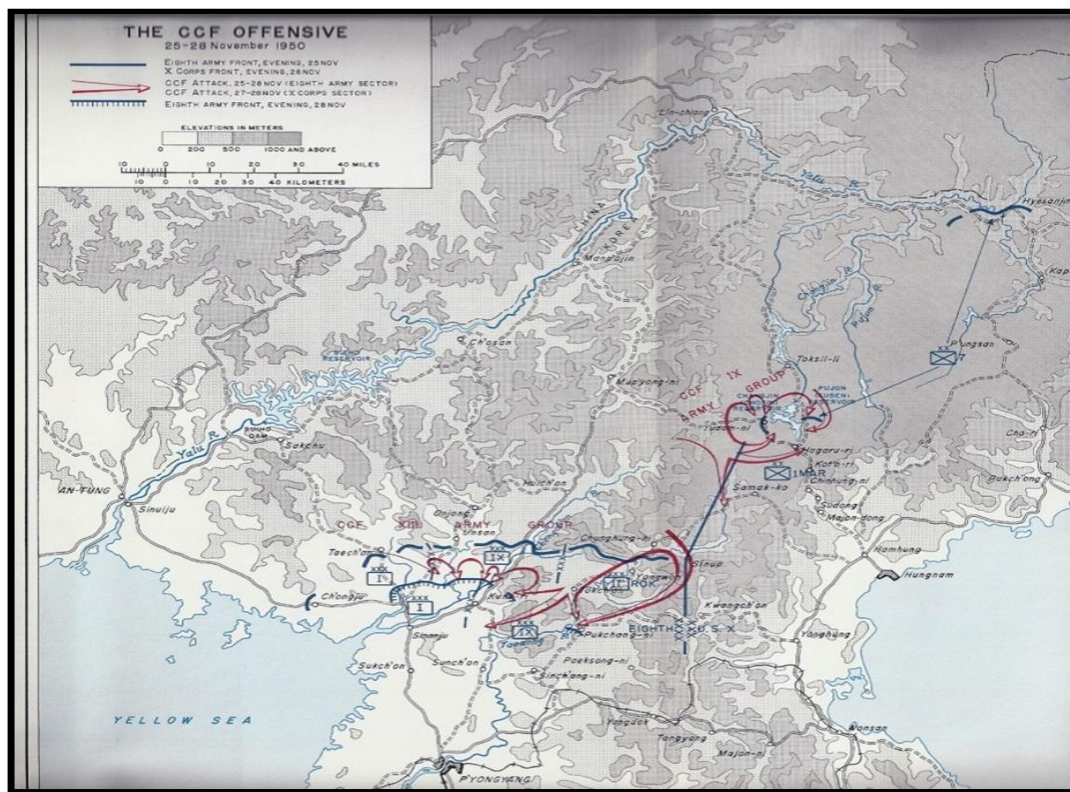


Figure 2. Chinese and UN Command Disposition, 25 November, 1950
Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986),

MacArthur's November offensive attacked into the teeth of the China's Phase II Counter-Offensive,¹¹ resulting in the defeat of the Eighth Army, the miraculous retreat and withdrawal of the X Corps and the initiation of a new war on the Korean Peninsula.

The Chinese attack focused first on the Eighth Army in the west followed by the X Corps in the East. Each force fought battles that would be forever cast as some of the most epic struggles in U.S. military history.

The initial Chinese onslaught struck the ROK II Corps protecting the Eighth Army's right flank, resulting in that corps' near disintegration. This collapse forced LTG Walker to conduct a fighting withdrawal in which the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division was nearly destroyed by PLA forces who had infiltrated through the rugged Korean mountains and laid in ambush, awaiting the road bound Americans. On November 28, Walker informed Tokyo that over 200,000 Chinese were attacking his forces in a massive offensive operation.¹² The Chinese attacks on the U.S. Marines and the Army's 7th Infantry Division in the east commenced in vicinity of the Chosin reservoir on November 27. As with the Eighth Army in the west, Major General Ned Almond's X Corps found itself under massive Chinese frontal attacks as well as having their lines of communication to the rear blocked by communist forces.¹³

The Department of the Army's Joint Daily Situation Report on November 28th cites the FEC commander's realization of the Chinese objectives: "General MacArthur declares that the ultimate objective of the Chinese Communists is undoubtedly a decisive effort aimed at the complete destruction of all UN forces in Korea."¹⁴ Realizing that the UN forces in Korea were on the brink of disaster, MacArthur met his commanders and staff whom he summoned to an emergency meeting in Tokyo. He then directed the Eighth Army to withdraw south towards Pyongyang to preserve its force, and the X Corps to withdraw from the Chosin Reservoir to North Korea's east coast.¹⁵ The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington confirmed these orders by belatedly directing MacArthur

to abandon his offensive mission and resume the defense.¹⁶ MacArthur's vision of a unified Korea and a rapid victory in his final campaign had ended.

Responsibility for the United Nations Command's defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communist Forces in North Korea lies with MacArthur and his senior intelligence officer, Willoughby. MacArthur is ultimately accountable for the defeat by virtue of the duties inherent in his position as the Commander, United Nations Command and United States Far East Command. His decisions resulted in the near destruction of his army in the field and significantly extended the duration of the Korean War. However, the commander made his decisions based on the advice and counsel of Charles A. Willoughby, his Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence. Willoughby's long tenure as MacArthur's senior intelligence officer ensured that he had near exclusive control over the enemy information to which MacArthur had access. The combination of these two individuals' personal and professional characteristics wrought devastating effects upon their soldiers in the field as well as upon the United States' strategic objectives for the war.

General MacArthur created a command environment within the FEC General Headquarters (GHQ) that rewarded sycophants and isolated those who challenged the conventional wisdom. The success of Operation Chromite, MacArthur's grand amphibious invasion at Inchon, resulted in his rejection of sound advice from anyone beyond his most trusted advisors. This isolation resulted in the denigration of input from his subordinate generals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and President Truman himself.¹⁷

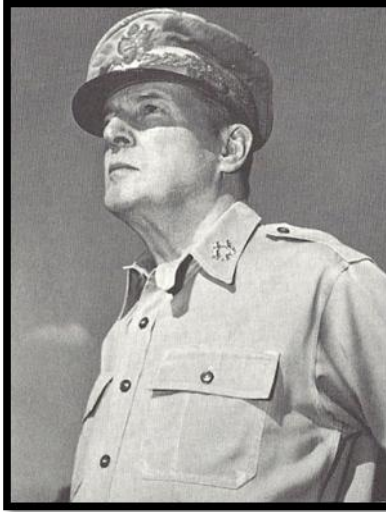


Figure 3. General of the Army Douglas MacArthur

Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), 771.

MacArthur based his decision to push to the Yalu in November 1950 on his belief that the war in Korea was in its final stages. Consultations with General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the Wake Island Conference on October 15, had resulted in plans to withdraw the Eighth Army to Japan by Christmas 1950, and to redeploy one division from Korea to Europe as soon as possible.¹⁸ Historian Trumbull Higgins found that General Bradley and the other service chiefs concurred with MacArthur, writing: “all assumed that a final victory was in the bag in the customary American tradition.”¹⁹ This attitude permeated MacArthur’s Far East Command, from his headquarters in Japan to the foxholes on the peninsula. Despite clear warnings from China at the strategic level, as well as operational and tactical intelligence, the UN Command prepared to launch its final offensive on November 24, while at the same time anticipating a rapid withdrawal to the comforts of garrison.

By the time the Korean War broke out in June 1950, Major General Charles Willoughby was one of the most experienced intelligence officers that the United States Army had to offer. The child of a German father and an American mother, Willoughby changed his name after serving in the U.S. Army in World War I. His experience as a defense attaché in South America and an instructor at the Army's Command and General Staff College provide insight into his view of international affairs and warfare at the operational and strategic level. Willoughby served as MacArthur's senior intelligence officer from the outbreak of conflict in World War II until MacArthur's relief in April 1951. Willoughby's experience in World War II and during the occupation of Japan influenced his analysis and recommendations to MacArthur. As the senior military intelligence officer in Asia, Willoughby had access to strategic and operational intelligence resources that would have had a significant impact on his assessments. How he integrated and fused information from these sources is vital to identifying why he did not alarm the command of possible Chinese intervention. His long term relationship with MacArthur solidified his position within the FEC Commander's inner circle and facilitated his ability to influence MacArthur's decision making. The FEC Intelligence directorate, G2, received multiple indicators that the Chinese Communists had the capability and intent to intervene decisively in the Korean War as early as November 1, yet failed to make a predictive assessment that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was preparing to attack. This evidence was available to Willoughby over three weeks before MacArthur launched his final push to the Yalu.

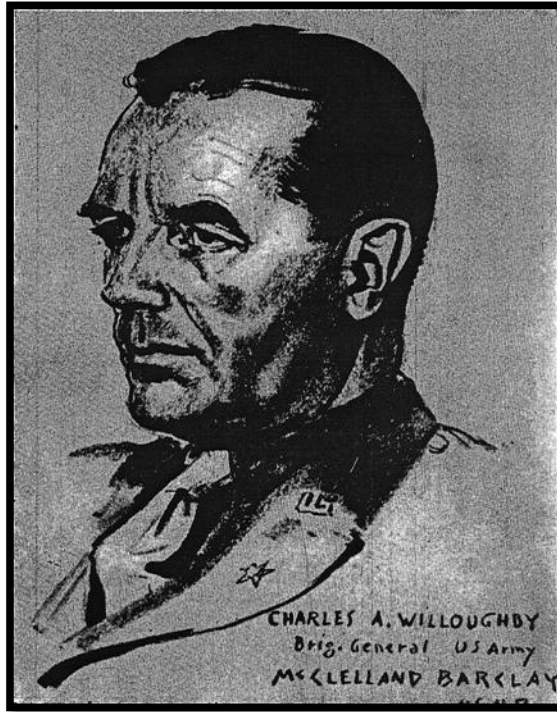


Figure 4. Major General Charles A. Willoughby
Source: Far East Command Military Intelligence Section. “Operations of the Military Intelligence Section, GHQ, SWPA/FEC/SCAP.” *Supplement: Korea, 1950-1951*, (General Headquarters, Far East Command, April 1951), 8.

Thereafter, given the competency and experience of these two officers, how could the United States and its allies have suffered such a dramatic turnaround of events when the end of the Korean War seemed imminent? Why did MacArthur, a legendary American warrior-leader, and Willoughby, one of the United States Army’s most experienced intelligence officers, fail to determine that China would decisively intervene in the Korean War? Information available to Willoughby should have enabled him to assess that Mao’s overt warnings and the People’s Liberation Army’s extensive preparations for war in Manchuria were the prelude to China’s entry into the war. Why was the United States Far East Command not prepared to meet the significant threat

posed by the People's Liberation Army they had identified in the mountains of North Korea in early November, 1950? How did institutional friction contribute to Willoughby's analysis and influence MacArthur's decision to continue to attack towards the Yalu, even after there was extensive evidence that the Chinese had committed a major combat force to Korea? Finally, how did Willoughby's personality and previous experience shape his assessments and influence his relationship with MacArthur? Each of these questions is vital to understanding how an American Army seemingly on the brink of victory saw its hopes of an early end to the Korean War shattered by the Chinese counteroffensive in the last week of November, 1950.

As an experienced intelligence officer, Willoughby had enough information to warn his commander of the danger of advancing northwards at multiple points in the Korean campaign after MacArthur defeated the NKPA south of the 38th Parallel. Willoughby repeatedly missed opportunities to predict the Chinese intervention based on reporting from strategic, operational, and finally, tactical sources. His failure to determine that the PLA had committed to conducting offensive operations against the UN Forces in Korea on a decisive scale resulted in the near destruction of the Eighth United States Army and the U.S. Army's X Corps in a strategic reversal that would extend the Korean War for nearly three more years.

¹David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 18.

²Robert Leckie, *Conflict: History of the Korean War 1950-53* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1962), 42.

³T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (Washington: Brassey's, 1963), 71.

⁴James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 108.

⁵Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 295.

⁶Leckie, *Conflict*, 126.

⁷*Ibid.*, 129.

⁸Trumbull Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

⁹Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 22.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 311.

¹¹Phase I of the Chinese offensive consisted of the attacks on ROK and U.S. forces in vicinity of Unsan between October 25 and November 1, 1950.

¹²Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 274.

¹³*Ibid.*, 274.

¹⁴Department of the Army, G2, "Joint Daily SITREP No. 143" (Washington, DC, November 28, 1950).

¹⁵Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 279.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 279.

¹⁷Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur*, 48.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 57-58.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 59.

CHAPTER 2

FAILURE AND PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

The U.S. troops are going to cross the 38th Parallel in an attempt to extend the war. If the U.S. troops really do so, we cannot sit idly by and remain indifferent. We will intervene.¹

— Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou En-Lai communicating his country's final warning to the United States through India's Ambassador to Beijing twelve days prior to the PLA's infiltration into North Korea.

Predictive intelligence analysis is the product of assessing immense amounts of information that are often conflicting, laden with false leads, and full of ambiguous indicators. Information available to Charles Willoughby during the first five months of the Korean War represented all of the challenges listed above, but careful analysis should have identified the PLA's capability and intent to inflict grave damage on the UN forces. It is the intelligence professional's duty to analyze the information available to him and provide commanders with intelligence products that enables them to make sound decisions in combat. As the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Far East Command, this was Willoughby's responsibility. What information was available to Willoughby from July through November 1950, and what was his analysis?

Clear indicators at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels showed Chinese Communist capability and intent to intervene in the Korean War in time for Willoughby to warn MacArthur that they had decided to confront American forces. By November 7, many leaders in the field, at MacArthur's headquarters in Japan, and in the halls of Washington understood that the People's Liberation Army had committed substantial combat forces to the Korean Peninsula. Despite this knowledge, Willoughby did not

determine that the PLA was preparing to execute a counteroffensive to defeat the UN advance into North Korea.

While Willoughby successfully identified Chinese military preparations, he failed to determine their intentions prior to MacArthur's final offensive on November 24, 1950. Willoughby failed by repeatedly falling victim to pervasive mirror imaging and acquiescing to MacArthur's operational plans as the UN Command became flush with success and Washington pressed to bring the war to a rapid conclusion. Indicators first came in the form of political warnings by the Chinese leadership at the strategic level, operational signs of a massive troop buildup north of the Yalu River in Manchuria, and tactically, with the capture of Chinese soldiers by the U.S. and their South Korean allies in the last week of October and first week of November. Willoughby was fully aware of these indicators, but did not fuse them into a predictive analytical product that would have provided demonstrative evidence that the Chinese intended to enter the Korean War on a massive scale.

Strategic warning of China's intentions to intervene in the Korean War came in the form of deliberate communications from the Chinese leadership as well as intelligence reporting and analysis from U.S. national agencies. Willoughby and the Central Intelligence Agency accurately identified China's rapid buildup of combat forces and related infrastructure in Manchuria from July through early October, yet they struggled to identify the Chinese intentions. Evidence clearly shows that the Chinese attempted to telegraph their objectives through diplomatic channels. Warnings from China steadily increased as the North Korean offensive stalled on the Naktong River. These indications continued as the UN Command rapidly reversed the nature of the war

as it exploited its gains following the successful Inchon landings and the disintegration of the North Korean People's Army.

Mao's general staff assessed that the NKPA could no longer achieve its objective of unifying the south under Communist rule by late July 1950, despite the fact that the NKPA was still advancing at that time. The Chinese leadership subsequently prepared the nation for combat in Korea.² The Korean War and the subsequent movement of the U.S. 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Strait indefinitely delayed Mao's plans to invade Taiwan and finish his destruction of the Chinese Nationalists. America's surprise involvement in Korea forced Mao to re-evaluate his national security priorities. Two questions loomed: why did the U.S. commit forces to Korea and why was Washington appearing to increase its support for Taiwan? Historian Sergei Gorchakov concludes: "To Mao, the answer to both seemed plain: he quickly concluded that the real U.S. aim was to threaten China itself, and he began to act accordingly."³ The People's Liberation Army subsequently began moving large numbers of its forces from the coastal areas opposite Taiwan to Manchuria in anticipation of fighting the Americans in Korea.

Chinese rhetoric significantly increased its fervor after an August 22 statement from the Soviet Ambassador to the UN warned that continuation of the Korean War would lead to the conflict's expansion.⁴ The Soviet Ambassador's concerns were well founded. China had already begun its path to entering the Korean War.

In a further warning on September 22, the Chinese Foreign Office issued a statement declaring that, "China would always stand on the side of the Korean people."⁵ This statement supported FEC G2 and CIA assumptions that the Chinese Communists would, at a minimum, provide covert support for the North Koreans. Following the

successful UN landings at Inchon on September 15 and the subsequent reversal of fortunes on the peninsula, Zhou En-Lai warned on September 30, “The Chinese people absolutely will not tolerate foreign aggression, nor will they supinely tolerate seeing their neighbors being savagely invaded by the imperialists.”⁶ The next day, South Korean troops crossed the 38th Parallel, providing Mao further proof that the U.S. and its allies were headed for the Yalu.

As the Chinese watched the North Korean Army dissolve before the advancing UN forces, Zhou En-Lai issued a specific threat intended to reach the UN leadership. On October 3, the Chinese Foreign Minister informed the Indian Ambassador to China, Dr. K. M. Pannikar, that “The U.S. troops are going to cross the 38th Parallel in an attempt to extend the war. If the U.S. troops really do so, we cannot sit idly and remain indifferent. *We will intervene.*”⁷ Pannikar promptly informed the British the next day, who in turn passed the information on to the Americans. While US intelligence at the operational and strategic levels had identified the PLA troop buildup in Manchuria, Zhou provided the previously missing Chinese intent with this warning.

Some leaders in the west distrusted Pannikar, due to his communist leanings and perceived anti-American sentiment in the past. In addition, the Indian Ambassador’s reports from China varied greatly. Only a week prior to passing Zhou En-Lai’s message of intervention, Pannikar communicated that he doubted the Chinese would send troops to Korea.⁸ This reversal certainly increased suspicion of Pannikar’s validity as a source in the minds of Willoughby and key leaders in Washington. Roger Tubby, White House Assistant Press Secretary from 1950 to 1952, remembered that the Chinese warnings through Pannikar were unclear: “You would never know whether this was part of a

poker game or whether it was for real. An Indian Ambassador in Peking had gotten word back to us that the Chinese really would go in, but he had been a rather unreliable source on occasions past.”⁹

Despite Tubby’s distrust of Pannikar, John Melby, who had recently returned from Asia while serving in the State Department’s Office of Philippine and South East Asian Affairs, attempted to warn his colleagues about the serious threat that the Chinese had communicated through the Indian Ambassador: “I was arguing you’ve got to pay attention to this man, no matter what you think of him. He’s got good connections, and if he says, “Watch out for the Chinese. If you cross the parallel, the Chinese are going to intervene, you’d better be careful because that’s what they’ll do.”¹⁰ In this context, Mao’s warnings to Washington lost their intended deterrent effect because of the questionable credibility of the Chinese leader’s designated agent for communications.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson echoed the sentiment of his Chinese experts in believing that the Communists had not recovered from their long civil war and were not capable of fighting the United States in Korea. During the 1951 MacArthur hearings, he listed the reasons why he believed China would not intervene:

(1) The number of trained troops required would be large, (2) there was a possibility that the internal control of the Chinese government would be weakened in that event, (3) the lack of any real advantage to China coming from such a war, (4) the probability that China’s international position would be weakened as a result.¹¹

Acheson’s statement demonstrates that mirror imaging was pervasive throughout the United States government. Unfortunately, Charles Willoughby and his G2 section produced the vast majority of intelligence information on China and Korea.

In a final public announcement of China's concerns over UN advancement into North Korea, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an ominous statement on October 11: "Now that the American forces are attempting to cross the thirty-eight parallel on a large scale, the Chinese people cannot stand idly by with regard to such a serious situation created by the invasion of Korea."¹² The Chinese Army began its infiltration into North Korea three days later.¹³

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) provided multiple reports from the initial North Korean invasion through the fall of 1950 that accurately described Chinese capabilities and intent to enter into combat on the peninsula. While Willoughby and MacArthur would later decry CIA reporting and analysis as not supporting their efforts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General of the Army, Omar N. Bradley, was an integral player in the formulation of U.S. defense policy in order to meet the numerous requirements posed by the budding Cold War. H.A. DeWeerd noted: "In reply to a question as to whether there was any delay involved at this stage [Fall 1950] in information reaching the JCS from the CIA, Bradley said "no", that if the CIA had any intelligence he would get it "right off the bat."¹⁴ Willoughby's daily teleconferences with the Joint Chiefs and Army Chief of Staff ensured that he had ready access to the CIA reporting and analysis, even before a paper copy could reach him by courier in Tokyo.

Key CIA reports issued on September 8 and October 12 reported that Chinese involvement in Korea was already underway and listed specific advantages for the Chinese if they were intent on entering into the Korean War decisively. Despite this analysis, CIA reporting did not definitively predict that the Chinese would go to war with

the UN forces. Despite reports of the massive communist troop buildup in Manchuria, the CIA's analysis vacillated as to the true nature of China's intent. Analysis embedded in the CIA documents directly reflected the FEC G2's reporting that refuted the possibility of Chinese entry into the war.¹⁵

On September 8, the CIA published "Intelligence Memorandum No. 324" specifically to: "assess the probability of an open commitment of Chinese Communist armed forces in Korea."¹⁶ It provided a pre-Inchon assessment that clearly articulated Chinese military capability and potential indications of intent to go to war in Korea. The report advised that the PLA activities in Manchuria could represent "stage setting" for overt involvement in Korea, but suggests that, "it appears more probable that the Chinese Communist participation in the Korean conflict will be more indirect, although significant, and will be limited to integrating into the North Korean forces, Manchurian volunteers, perhaps including air units as well as ground troops."¹⁷ Only in one concluding paragraph did the CIA's analysts address factors that would argue against Chinese involvement in Korea.

The September 8 report addressed several assumptions that reflected the likelihood of external communist support for the North Korean invasion of the South. In the first assumption, the CIA determined that limited Chinese covert assistance was already underway at that point in the war.¹⁸ In addressing the potential for greater involvement by China in the war, the CIA assumed that "China would require approval from the Soviets and would indicate the USSR is prepared to accept increased risk of starting a general war with the West."¹⁹ This statement further advances the argument that mirror imaging played a significant role in analysis of China's intentions.

The CIA's analysis reflected the Far East Command's accurate description of Chinese troops massing in Manchuria, yet specifically addressed indications of PLA intent to intervene that did not accord with Willoughby's perceptions. The report cites official Chinese communiqués as well as military activity as its indicators of Chinese intent. Addressing increasingly hostile Chinese statements, the CIA reported:

“Numerous Chinese Communist propaganda attacks on the US during recent weeks, charging the US with “intervention” and “aggression” in Taiwan, have been climaxed by two new protests to the UN claiming US air attacks in violation of the Manchuria-Korea border.” The report provided its analysis of these vocal Chinese pronouncements: “It is possible that these charges, besides serving a useful propaganda function, may be aimed at providing an excuse for Chinese Communist intervention in Korea.”²⁰

The CIA accurately identified the unmistakable massing of PLA troops and equipment in Manchuria as clear indications that China was increasing its capability to go to war. In addition to the movement of China's most capable field army (Lin Piao's Fourth) from the Taiwan Straits region, infrastructure development demonstrated that China was significantly increasing its potential to sustain the bulk of its armed forces in Manchuria. These improvements included facilities to support its air forces in close proximity to the Sino-Korean border. CIA analysts assessed that the airbases in vicinity of Antung²¹ were the main base for the North Korean Air Force.²² In addition to supporting North Korean aircraft, the CIA estimated the three airfields in Antung could support up to 300 combat aircraft.²³ The report added that these activities represented an important indicator of Chinese intent: “Strengthening of Manchurian border defenses might either be a logical security development in view of the Korean conflict or a prelude

to the offensive employment of forces in the area.”²⁴ This assessment essentially predicted two Chinese courses of action, one that was defensive in order to protect the Manchurian frontier, another which was offensive and had the potential to directly affect MacArthur’s forces in Korea.

Despite the evidence that the CIA found to support a future Chinese intervention in Korea, the September 8 report weighed against a massive, overt involvement. The first reason speculated that Chinese entry into the Korean War would “clearly transform the Korean conflict from an ostensibly ‘internal’ dispute to an international struggle.”²⁵ In this regard, the CIA assessed that China would avoid such escalation and entry into the global east-west conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The CIA cited two other factors in the estimate as of, “minor consequence in so momentous a decision.” These factors were: “Chinese national and military pride might cause friction if Chinese troops were placed under Soviet or Korean command; and Chinese Communist intervention would probably eliminate all prospects for China’s admission to the United Nations.”²⁶ The CIA did not address the ramifications of a unilateral Chinese intervention where its troops would remain under Mao’s command and control, fighting for Chinese objectives, as opposed to the Soviets or North Koreans.

The CIA published its next substantive report on the potential for Chinese involvement in Korea on October 12, 1950. In contrast with the September 8 report, this assessment was not clear on ramifications of PLA intervention. In its analysis of Chinese capabilities, the CIA stated that the communists were “lacking requisite air and naval support,” which did not restrict the Chinese from entering the war, but the report expressed doubt about whether their efforts would be decisive.²⁷ While the CIA focused

on a lack of air and naval forces as a limiting factor in Chinese capabilities that would weigh heavily upon Mao's decision to go to war, American reconnaissance planes had already identified nearly 100 Russian built fighter planes deployed at the Antung airfields that identified in the September 8th report.²⁸ On November 1, a flight of American fighters from the U.S. Fifth Air Force reported that they had engaged six to nine enemy jet aircraft. In the ensuing battle, one enemy fighter was damaged and fled north over the Yalu River.²⁹ Willoughby dismissed this report and others to follow that identified that the Communists were making significant improvements in their air power, one of the primary reasons why Willoughby assessed that the Chinese would not intervene in Korea.

Despite the inconclusive nature of the CIA analysis in the October 12 assessment, the report did provide seven potential reasons why China might decide to enter the conflict, assuming Chinese Communist success:

1. Major gain of prestige for China.
2. Major gain for World Communism with increase in stature of China in the Sino-Soviet axis.
3. Potential to eliminate a common front with a democratic nation.
4. Protect strategic power plants on the Yalu River.
5. Enable Chinese to use the war to divert attention from failed domestic economic policies.
6. Would bolster strong anti-western feelings in Asia.
7. Justify extensive Soviet military & economic aid.³⁰

These justifications for potential Chinese intervention provide a rare American analysis of Chinese strategic interests from the Chinese perspective. The October 12 report drastically differed from Willoughby's continuing assessment that the Chinese would not intervene because the tactical situation on the battlefield was not favorable for the communists. Willoughby's assessment of Chinese intent was best demonstrated by his response to questions by retired Lieutenant General James M. Gavin about the

Chinese threat in late September: “If the Chinese were going to intervene they would have done so when we made the Inchon landing.”³¹ Willoughby clearly did not look at the ramifications of the UN advance into North Korea from the Chinese perspective. Goncharov, Lewis and Xue quote in their book, *Uncertain Partners*, Mao’s telegram to Zhou En-Lai on October 13 providing Mao’s justification for going to war in Korea:

If we do not send troops [to Korea], the reactionaries at home and abroad would be swollen with arrogance when the enemy troops [U.S. forces] press on toward the Yalu River . . . the entire Northeast Frontier Force would be tied down and the power supplies in South Manchuria would be controlled [by hostile parties].³²

From this perspective, the CIA’s assessment on October 12 was not far from Mao’s reasoning for going to war in Korea. The CIA assessment correctly identified Mao’s interests in using a war in Korea to silence internal and external opposition as well as protecting the strategic hydroelectric generators on the Yalu.

The October 12 report also provided reasons that argued against Chinese intentions to act decisively in Korea. This information directly reflected Willoughby’s analysis and mirror imaging by analyzing Chinese intent from a western perspective. The primary reason the CIA’s argument determined that China would not enter the Korean War was that their assessment that Mao was fearful of entering into a war with the United States. China’s recovery from its long civil war also played heavily in the CIA report: “Their domestic problems are of such magnitude that the regime’s entire domestic program and economy would be jeopardized by the strains and the material damage which would be sustained in war with the US.”³³ Diplomatically, intervention would significantly decrease China’s chances of getting into the United Nations, a known Communist objective. Furthermore, such a commitment would likely require Mao to request more aid from the Soviet Union, making China more susceptible to Moscow’s

control. These points of view did not take into account that Mao was more concerned with ending the threat to the Chinese Communist revolution by defeating the Nationalists on Taiwan and UN forces in Korea over its acceptance into the UN and any potential subordination to the Soviets.

This analysis of the Chinese capability to sustain a fight with the UN forces eerily echoes sentiment espoused by MacArthur's headquarters: "Open intervention would be extremely costly unless protected by powerful Soviet air cover and naval support."³⁴ While this statement came from a CIA report, the agency derived its tactical and operational intelligence almost entirely from Willoughby's analysis. This conclusion judged the costs of war by western standards, not from the enemy's perspective, the classic fault when analysts succumb to mirror imaging. The CIA's analysis also ignored the reporting in the September 8 memo describing the infrastructure development to support increased Communist air force operations immediately north of the Yalu in Manchuria.

In the most glaring example of circular reporting found in the CIA's analysis of the situation in Korea, the agency parroted Willoughby's analysis that the Chinese Communists had missed their chance to act decisively: "From a military standpoint the most favorable time for intervention in Korea has passed."³⁵ This opinion echoed Willoughby's assessment that China's best opportunity to intervene would have been when UN troops were at their weakest in the Pusan perimeter or during the point of vulnerability immediately after the Inchon landings. While the CIA document did not cite the FEC G2, it likely represented a direct lift from Willoughby's written reports.

The CIA's October 12 assessment of the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention fell victim to the agency's near total reliance upon the Far East Command's analysis leading to mirror imaging and circular reporting. The report failed to build upon indicators that the CIA identified in its September 8 analysis, to include the development of airfields in Manchuria, that were identified as limiting factors in the Chinese decision to intervene. In the CIA's final analysis in the October 12 report, "intervention will probably be confined to covert assistance to the North Koreans."³⁶ This conclusion was a critical failure. The lack of an independent assessment of Chinese intent and capabilities meant that policy makers and strategists in Washington were unable to challenge MacArthur's optimistic predictions.

The CIA published a memorandum for President Truman on November 1, providing an estimate of Chinese capabilities and intent that mirrored Willoughby's analysis at that time. Citing "field estimates," the memo titled, "Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea" informed the Commander in Chief that between 15,000 and 20,000 Chinese Communist soldiers were deployed in Korea. Willoughby's report to the Department of the Army G2 on the same day estimated that up to 16,500 Chinese troops were in North Korea.³⁷ The identification of Soviet built jet fighters operating between Antung, Manchuria and Sinuiju, North Korea, raised the possibility that the USSR might be conducting air defense operations in the China-Korea border area. Despite correctly identifying Mao's fears of a potential UN invasion of Manchuria, the CIA memo provided the following assessment of Chinese intentions: "Their main motivation at present appears to be to establish a limited "cordon sanitaire" south of the Yalu River."³⁸ While this report does not speculate on the ability of the PLA to conduct a major

counteroffensive against MacArthur's forces, it concludes that the Chinese were willing to fight to protect their border with North Korea and the vital hydro-electric infrastructure on the Yalu River that provided energy for Chinese industry in Manchuria.

The first National Intelligence Estimate that the CIA published after the initial fighting between Chinese Communist Forces and the UN Command in Korea on November 8 provided senior U.S. leaders with revised estimates of Chinese strengths and capabilities. It refuted Willoughby's assessment that the Chinese would not intervene because the most opportune time for them to do so had passed: "It is significant that the Chinese Communists refrained from committing troops at two earlier critical phases of the Korean War, namely when UN held no more than a precarious toehold in the Pusan perimeter and later when the UN landings were made at Inchon."³⁹ This opinion represented a growing divide between the Central Intelligence Agency's analysis and that of the Far East Command G2.

The CIA departed from Willoughby's assessment of Chinese intentions, concluding that the PLA was positioned to execute two courses of action in Korea: halting UN advances by committing major units in a gradual effort or forcing UN withdrawal to defensive positions farther south by a powerful assault.⁴⁰ This is the first mention of the PLA's ability to decisively change the nature of the conflict and is a departure from the CIA's memo to President Truman on November 1. The November 8 National Intelligence Estimate continued to provide a sage assessment of the potential ramifications of the latter course of action. The report suggested that if a PLA offensive succeeded, the Chinese would press their advantage by drawing on their massed forces in Manchuria. Continuing this predictive analysis, the CIA assessed that the Chinese

soldiers, veterans of the recent Civil War, would be able to take advantage of North Korea's rugged terrain and brutal winter resulting in a stalemate on the peninsula. The report further warned, "Such a military deadlock would contain UN forces in Korea and expose them to attrition."⁴¹ The National Intelligence Estimate concluded that the Chinese Communists would most likely build their combat capability in Korea gradually until, "forces of major magnitude are involved."⁴² Unfortunately for the soldiers of the UN Command in Korea, this report did not influence Willoughby or MacArthur to reconsider the ill-fated offensive, planned to commence only two weeks later.

CIA reporting mirrored Willoughby's estimates of Chinese capability and intent until its National Intelligence Estimate published on 8 November, 1950. While the intelligence agencies in Japan and Washington accurately described the massive PLA troop buildup in Manchuria, it was not until the CIA's analysis in its October 12 report that potential Chinese strategic objectives were addressed from the Chinese point of view. Despite their acknowledgement of potential Chinese objectives in mid-October, the CIA continued to directly reflect Willoughby's reporting until early November. Willoughby and the CIA's assessments reached a major point of divergence with the CIA's publication of the 8 November NIE that provided a predictive analysis of two courses of action within the PLA's capabilities. While the CIA warned of the PLA's ability to act decisively on the Korean Peninsula, Willoughby continued to argue that the Chinese did not pose a significant threat to the UN offensive.

The strategic warning of increasing Chinese combat capabilities in Manchuria, only miles from the North Korean border, did not deter MacArthur in his determination to complete the destruction of the NKPA and unify Korea under southern rule by the end

of 1950. In the west the Eighth Army attacked northward from Pyongyang, oriented on the border city of Sinuiju, while the X Corps advanced to the Yalu River from the eastern coastal port of Wonsan through the heart of North Korea's rugged mountains. If China's strategic intent was still unclear in Willoughby's mind, operational and tactical reporting from both the Eighth Army and X Corps should have led him to the conclusion that the Chinese warnings were more than rhetoric and foretold the coming battles.

As the Eighth Army advanced north of Pyongyang on October 20, the lack of enemy resistance provided mixed signals. On one hand, it appeared to confirm that the North Korean Army was incapable of mounting a defense, yet on the other hand it concerned some of the more experienced leaders on the ground.⁴³ South Korean General Paik Sun Yup, commander of the ROK 1st Division, noted that the absence of anyone, North Korean troops or civilians, as they approached Unsan was a marked change from their earlier advance when refugees clogged roads on a regular basis.⁴⁴ On October 25, General Paik's concerns were confirmed when his division met stiff resistance and was counterattacked north of Unsan. The enemy force attacking the 1st ROK Division employed accurate mortar fire in conjunction with machine guns.⁴⁵ This foe also executed flanking attacks and enveloped Paik's forces from the rear, leading him to believe that the ROK 1st Division had engaged a substantial Chinese element; In the process, Paik's soldiers captured their first Chinese prisoner in battle.⁴⁶



Figure 5. General Paik Sun Yup

Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), 350.

The preliminary interrogation of this prisoner revealed that he was a Chinese soldier who was part of a much larger element. The prisoner, Private Chung San Shien, told his interrogator that he and his comrades had been sent to Korea to prevent a U.S. invasion of China. He was much better clothed than previously captured North Korean soldiers.⁴⁷ As General Paik personally questioned him, the Chinese prisoner willingly opened up: “He was a regular soldier in the Chinese Communist Army, from Guangdong province. He told Paik in passing that there were tens of thousands of Chinese in the nearby mountains.”⁴⁸

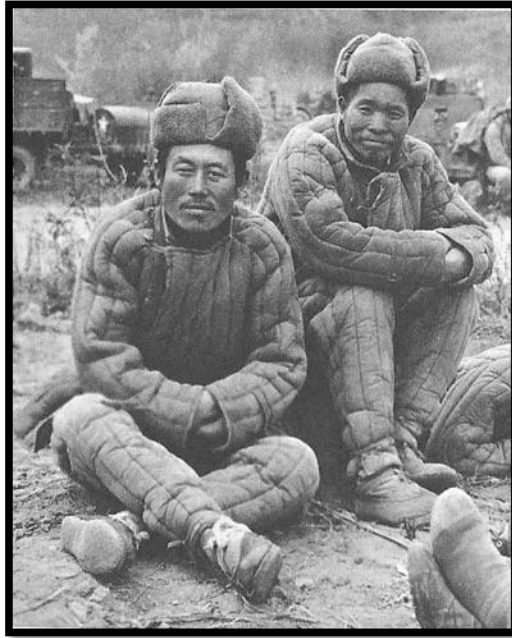


Figure 6. Chinese Prisoners in Winter Uniforms

Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), 743.

The interrogation report provided detailed information on when and how this Chinese soldier and his unit entered Korea. Marching from the city of Antung, the soldier's unit crossed into Korea on the night of October 19th on a recently constructed wooden bridge. The report also provided indicators of Chinese techniques to deceive UN intelligence operations. A Chinese officer ordered Paik's prisoner and his fellow soldiers not speak if captured, unless they were fluent in Korean. These soldiers were wearing North Korean uniforms, issued on October 5. More ominously, the prisoner claimed that his officer told him that 600,000 Chinese soldiers were on their way to defeat the U.S. Army.⁴⁹

The I Corps staff immediately sent this information through Eighth Army Headquarters to the FEC G2 in Japan. Halberstam writes that Willoughby's response

was that the POW was likely a Korean resident of China, refuting direct evidence of deliberate PLA intervention on the peninsula.⁵⁰ The G2's rejection of the Chinese prisoner's true nationality reflects mirror imaging as he had previously assessed that many members of the NKPA had fought in China with Mao's forces during the Chinese civil war.

The interrogator's assessment of the prisoner concluded that the information the captive provided was, "fairly reliable," supporting the I Corps' determination that the prisoner was in fact an authentic Chinese national. The only justification that Willoughby could claim to support his theory that I Corps was holding a Korean masquerading as a Chinese was the fact that he was wearing an NKPA uniform and had stated that, "A small percentage of the troops [referring to his unit] were Koreans (PLA Koreans)."⁵¹ In order to come to his conclusion that the prisoner was Korean, Willoughby and his staff would have had to have overlooked four pages of the questioning where the prisoner described in detail his initial entry into the Chinese Nationalist Army in 1949, capture by the Communists in February, 1950, and subsequent training and onward movement to Manchuria with the Fortieth People's Army.⁵²

Despite the detailed information provided by the first Chinese soldier captured by UN forces in North Korea, as well as the increase in tactical proficiency demonstrated by the enemy in the counterattack on the 1st ROK Division, the Eighth Army G2, Lieutenant Colonel Tarkenton, concluded in his assessment on October 26, "There were, however, no indications of open intervention on the part of the Chinese Communist Forces in Korea."⁵³ While this statement may have been technically correct at the time, it does not address the potential consequences if the Chinese prisoner's information was correct.

In addition to the prisoner interrogated by General Paik, the ROK Army captured more Chinese soldiers near the Chongchon River between October 25 and November 1. Second Lieutenant George Hong of the 164th Military Intelligence Service Detachment⁵⁴ interrogated Private Chung San Syng, a Chinese soldier, on October 26, only one day after the ROK Army captured him near Unsan. Hong questioned Syng using a detailed list, called Essential Elements of Information (EEI), which the G2's interrogators had specifically developed for interviewing Chinese prisoners of war. The report generated by this interrogation indicated that at least 50 – 60,000 Chinese troops from the Fortieth PLA Army were in Korea. Private Syng acknowledged that he saw twenty Soviet built T-34/85 tanks⁵⁵ crossing the Yalu River into Korea on October 15. Later that night, the Fortieth PLA Army crossed from Antung in Manchuria into Sinuiju, North Korea, using a wooden bridge. This report also matched the previous interrogation report in its description of the PLA issuing NKPA uniforms to its soldiers prior to entering North Korea, as well as using hours of darkness for movement in order to avoid U.S. air power.⁵⁶

Rumors of Chinese involvement in North Korea, likely stemming from the contacts on October 25 and the resultant prisoner of war interrogation reports, spread throughout the military chain of command as well as diplomatic circles, and reached all the way to the State Department in Washington. Regional experts in the Department of State's Chinese section did little to raise questions over the reports that UN forces in Korea had taken prisoner Chinese soldiers. John F. Melby, a career foreign service officer, recalled, "The Chinese language officers were just poo-pooing it." They said, "There is not the slightest chance that they can become involved in Korea; their problems

are so enormous that it's not possible that they can do it for years."⁵⁷ This view indicates that mirror imaging was not limited to the intelligence community. In this statement, the State Department's Chinese experts assessed China's capability and intent to intervene in Korea by using the Communists' apparent weakness when compared to America as their benchmark.

Many of the reports that concerned leaders at the point of the UN Command's advance were not definitive in nature, but gave them an increasing sense that something was wrong. One of the first American patrols north of Unsan from 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, led by Sergeant "Pappy" Miller, reported to battalion headquarters that a farmer told them that thousands of Chinese soldiers lay in wait for them.⁵⁸ In addition to SGT Miller's information, interrogations of Chinese prisoners captured on October 28 and 30 by the 1st Cavalry Division's 5th Cavalry Regiment provided increasing detail as to the scope and intentions of the Chinese Communist involvement in North Korea. Three interrogation reports, published on November 2, confirmed that the PLA's 115th and 116th Divisions of the Thirty-Ninth Army had crossed into Korea on October 28.⁵⁹

This information, combined with the ROK Army reporting, should have further increased awareness that a large Chinese force lay in wait for the Eighth Army as it advanced towards the Yalu. If Willoughby had correctly assessed this information and compared it with Chinese rhetoric, he might have been able to provide a definitive warning to MacArthur and the troops in the field and prevented the 8th Cavalry Regiment from being devastated by the Chinese on the night of November 1.

By October 30, the Eighth Army had taken ten Chinese prisoners and had identified elements of three divisions from two separate Chinese Communist army groups

within North Korea. Despite this, assessments varied greatly of what the true scale of the Chinese Communist involvement in the war. The Central Intelligence Agency's October 30 Daily Korea Summary reported that despite the Eighth Army's assessment that the Chinese 119th and 120th Divisions from the Fortieth Army and 117th Division from the Thirty- Ninth Army were in Korea, "The Far East Command does not believe any of these units of these Chinese Armies are in Korea."⁶⁰ This disagreement constituted a major discrepancy between the intelligence assessment from the unit in the field, the Eighth Army, and Charles Willoughby's G2 section in the Far East Command Headquarters in Japan.

Some intelligence officers were increasingly concerned about the reports of Chinese troops in the UN Command's axis of advance. The G2 of I Corps, Eighth Army, Colonel Percy Thompson, suspected that PLA forces were operating inside North Korea by late October.⁶¹ His proximity to the battlefield north of Pyongyang likely provided him a much better access to reports, that while individually were inconclusive, when combined pointed towards Chinese intervention. David Halberstam writes that Thompson directly attempted to warn Col Hal Edson, the commander of the 1st Cavalry Division's advanced guard 8th Cavalry Regiment, but Edson did not take Thompson seriously. The optimism that the war was nearly over also impeded Thompson's efforts to communicate his concerns to senior leaders on the peninsula as well as in Japan.⁶²

Willoughby's report to the Department of the Army G2, on October 31, reconciles the difference in the numbers of Chinese prisoners taken in the previous week in acknowledging that twenty-eight Chinese Communist soldiers were in UN captivity. The report also shows that both Eighth Army and X Corps captured Chinese troops,

demonstrating a significant geographic dispersion of Chinese forces. Despite several detainee reports describing a massive Chinese Communist movement into North Korea, Willoughby's assessment cites just one interrogation report that only "token forces from the Fortieth Army Headquarters and from each of its divisions entered Korea on 20 October."⁶³ This opinion represents analysis based on only one of many interrogation reports, a report chosen because it supported the FEC G2's assessment of Chinese Communist involvement in Korea at that time.

The ROK 1st Division's experience on the Chongchon River foreshadowed the first battle between the United States Army and the Chinese Communist Forces on the night of November 1. Major General Hap Gay, commanding the 1st Cavalry Division, had become concerned about the increasing reports of Chinese troops in his access of advance and worried about the dispersed nature of his division. In addition to these concerns, rumors that the division was to return home before the end of the year increasingly pre-occupied his men.⁶⁴ Colonel Edson, leading the 8th Cavalry, noted on the morning of November 1 that smoke from forest fires blanketed the area. He had his regiment spread out in open terrain north of the Chongchon River near the village of Unsan. The obvious absence of civilians and mounting reports of Chinese in the area led him to believe that the fires had been set to mask enemy troop movements from United Nations ground and air observation.⁶⁵ In the last weeks of October, numerous forest fires were likely set by the PLA to obscure their infiltration.⁶⁶

On the afternoon of November 1, a spotter plane observed large numbers of unidentified infantry soldiers moving south towards the Chongchon River. Despite extensive artillery fires, the unidentified enemy force continued to advance. At this point,

General Gay requested permission to withdraw the exposed 8th Cavalry Regiment south of Unsan to consolidate his force, but I Corps denied this request. The force that Gay's artillery engaged was later identified as the two Chinese divisions (115th and 116th) that would savage the 8th Cavalry later that night.⁶⁷

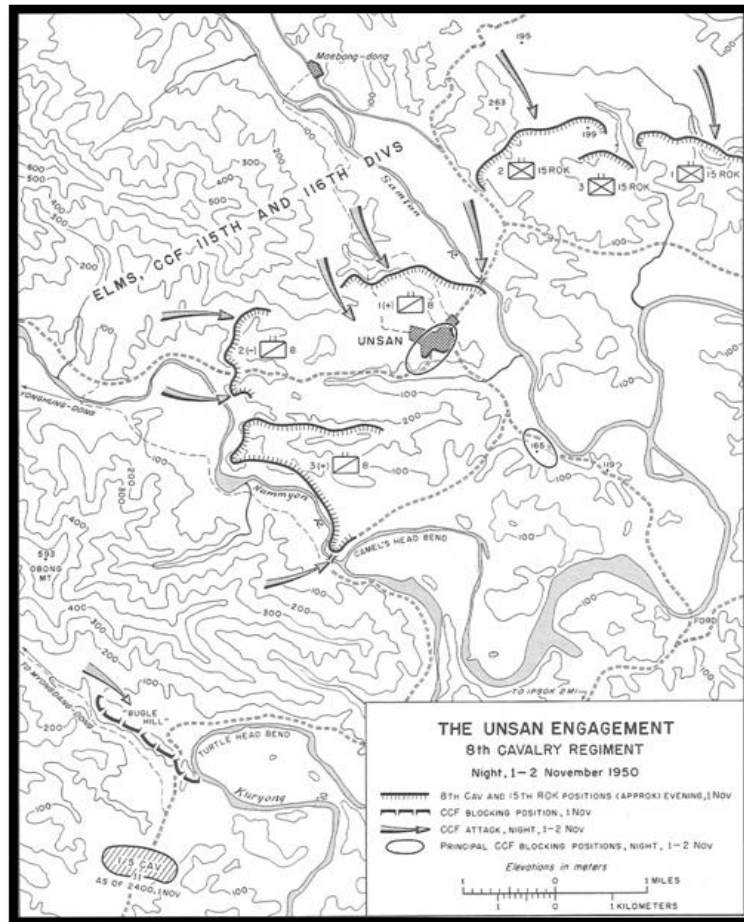


Figure 7. The PLA Attacks the 8th Cavalry

Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), 692.

The 8th Cavalry's defeat at Unsan by two divisions of Chinese troops sent shock waves throughout the 1st Cavalry Division, I Corps and Eighth Army headquarters. The Eighth Army's G3 noted in the November 2 war diary "This period was significant in that – for the first time since the breakout offensive of 16 September–EUSAK was forced to assume a defensive role in the face of the enemy's successful attacks."⁶⁸ The Eighth Army G2, Lieutenant Colonel Tarkenton, provided further significance of the 8th Cavalry's battle at Unsan by noting that seventeen Chinese prisoners were now in custody and that elements of two PLA Armies (the Thirty-Ninth and Fortieth), including six divisions, were now opposing the Eighth Army. The G2 also noted in his report that the enemy at Unsan displayed improved tactical capabilities to include heavy mortars, multiple rocket launchers, and demolitions that the enemy used to disable UN armor. Most importantly, he found: "This enemy group displayed an unusual ability to fight at night."⁶⁹

In the wake of the intense fighting at Unsan, the Eighth Army's Lieutenant General Walton J. Walker sent an urgent message to MacArthur describing the action: "AN AMBUSH AND SURPRISE ATTACK BY FRESH WELL ORGANIZED AND WELL TRAINED UNITS, SOME OF WHICH WERE CHINESE COMMUNIST FORCES."⁷⁰ While this initial report did not fully disclose the scope of the Chinese involvement in the battle, it should have been clear to MacArthur and Willoughby that the nature of the Korean War had significantly changed. After the defeat of the U.S. 8th Cavalry Regiment at Unsan on the night of November 1-2, Willoughby flew to Pyongyang to meet with the Eighth Army commander. Walker abruptly told Willoughby "Charles, we know the Chinese are here; you tell us what they are here for."⁷¹ While

Willoughby's November 3 intelligence estimate reflected that Chinese Communist forces were in fact fighting UN forces in North Korea, he did not make the assessment that the Chinese would take the offensive in a manner that would dramatically reverse the nature of the conflict.

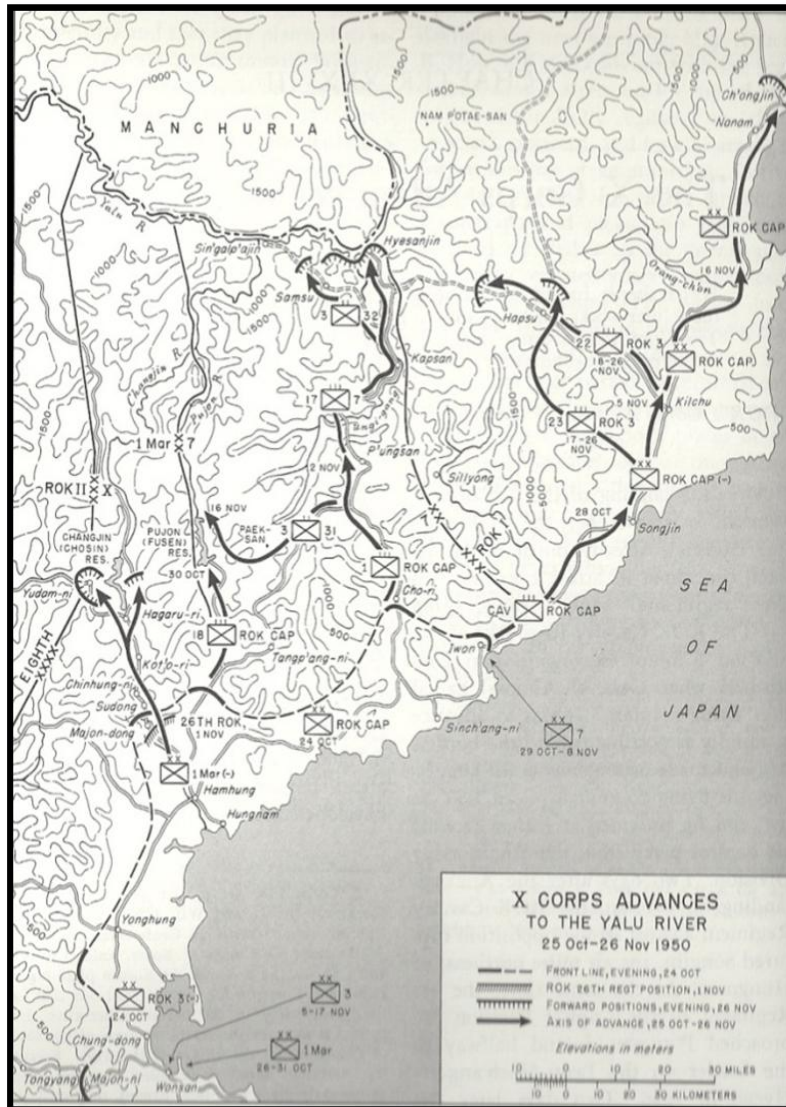


Figure 8. X Corps Disposition, 25 Oct-26 Nov 1950

Source: Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), 730.

While the Eighth Army was fighting an increasingly capable enemy and capturing Chinese soldiers on a frequent basis, General Almond's X Corps, made up of the 1st Marine Division, the Army's 3rd and 7th Infantry Divisions, as well as several ROK divisions, was having similar experiences on the east side of the Korean Peninsula. The Marines took their first Chinese prisoner on October 25, the same day that the ROK 1st Division captured its first Chinese soldiers in vicinity of the Chongchon River.⁷² The American advisor to the 26th ROK Regiment, subordinate to the American X Corps, confirmed that the prisoner was a Chinese, "who said he belonged to the 5th Regiment of the Chinese 8th Army," followed by his assertion that up to 5,000 more Chinese Communist troops were nearby.⁷³

Reports from patrols over the next several days identified what appeared to be more Chinese soldiers moving in the hills. On October 28, ROK Army soldiers under Almond's command captured two more PLA soldiers near Sudong, a village on the X Corps axis of advance towards the Chosin Reservoir.⁷⁴ Almond visited the ROK I Corps Commander at Hamhung on October 30 and personally interviewed sixteen Chinese prisoners. These soldiers provided detailed information on their division's infiltration into Korea, starting on October 14. Almond immediately informed MacArthur via radio that his forces had made contact with Chinese Communists. Although Almond was fiercely loyal to his patron, MacArthur, his headquarters repeatedly informed MacArthur and Willoughby of the increasing indications that the Chinese were operating in force in the X Corps area of operations. After initial contact with Chinese troops north of Wonsan, the Xth Corps G2 reported on October 29, "Integral PLA units have been committed against UN Forces."⁷⁵

By October 31, Almond's corps had captured eighteen Chinese near the Changjin (Chosin) Reservoir. Interrogations identified that they belonged to the PLA's 124th Division and noted that while these prisoners hadn't eaten in three days, they were well equipped with new winter clothing.⁷⁶ The 7th Infantry Division, on the eastern flank of the 1st Marine Division, fought an estimated battalion of Chinese on November 8. The division reported it had killed at least fifty Chinese troops before the enemy withdrew.⁷⁷ At this point, all divisions within Almond's X Corps, excluding the 3rd Infantry Division near Wonsan, had encountered significant PLA resistance.

By October 30, both major operational combat commanders, Walker and Almond, had captured Chinese Communist soldiers hundreds of miles apart. The geographic distance between the Eighth Army and X Corps demonstrated that contact with Chinese troops was not a result of isolated incidents and represented a major deployment of Chinese Communist forces in North Korea.

At this point in the campaign, Willoughby should have been able to compare the tactical reporting coming from captured Chinese soldiers and significantly increasing enemy capabilities demonstrated by the enemy in the battles near Unsan and Sudong to the identification of the Chinese troop buildup in Manchuria at the operational level along with strategic warning provided by the Chinese leadership in early October. By the end of the first week of November 1950, the FEC G2 had enough data to identify the Chinese order of battle in North Korea and should have been able to determine that the Chinese Communists had fully committed to entering the Korean War. Rhetoric from the communist leadership in Beijing mirrored the political indoctrination and guidance given to the lowest ranking Chinese soldiers captured by the United Nations forces. One

common theme stands clear: the bulk of the Chinese Communist Army deployed in Manchuria since July, 1950, had entered Korea to defeat the Americans before they could reach the Manchurian frontier.

Reporting recorded in the FEC G2 Daily Intelligence Summaries (DIS) shows that Willoughby accurately identified the massive Chinese build up in Manchuria, recognized that PLA forces may have been committed in Korea by mid-October, yet arrogantly disregarded indicators of Mao's strategic intent. Willoughby's analysis provided conflicting reporting, yet still showed a theme that the Chinese Communists posed a threat to the UN Command. Despite this assessment, the G2's analysis dismissed reporting that the PLA had the capability and intent to take action on an unprecedented scale. The most tragic example of this faulty analysis occurred when the DIS issued on October 28 dismissed Chinese intentions in Korea despite numerous conflicting reports. Analysis of Willoughby's assessments show that from the onset of war on the Korean Peninsula, he accurately identified the growing Chinese capabilities while ignoring clear signs of their intentions and failed to influence General MacArthur to take effective action to counter this threat.

Willoughby's early assessments identified indications that China was increasing its military readiness in Manchuria, on the North Korean border, in response to the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. By July 3, Willoughby's department reported that, "The Chinese had stationed two cavalry divisions and four armies (120,000 men) in Manchuria."⁷⁸ The September 2 DIS highlighted an erroneous report from August 29 that four Chinese armies⁷⁹ had already entered North Korea.⁸⁰ This example of faulty intelligence reporting of major PLA intervention reduced the credibility of the FEC G2's

analysis. The September 8 Daily Report included information provided by the Chinese Nationalist Ministry of Defense (from Chaing Kai Shek's government in exile on Formosa) that stated that the Chinese Communists would commit their Fourth Field Army against UN forces in Korea if the war turned against the North Koreans.⁸¹ Willoughby highlights this information in his book, *MacArthur: 1941-1951*, published in 1954, confirming that the Chinese Nationalists issued a warning on August 27 that the Communists on the mainland intended to intervene in Korea.⁸² In retrospect, Goncharov, Lewis and Xue found that China's Central Military Commission decided as early as July 7 to move the PLA's Fourth Field Army to the Korean border.⁸³ Indications of this large deployment of China's most capable field army became readily apparent. James Schnabel noted that shortly after the successful Inchon landings in mid September, "General Willoughby speculated that 450,000 Chinese troops were massed in Manchuria."⁸⁴ At that point, Willoughby specifically identified that China regarded the presence of UN forces on the Yalu as, "a serious threat to their regime."⁸⁵ This report is a rare departure from Willoughby's normal western centric analysis of Chinese objectives from a Chinese perspective. Unfortunately, the success of the Inchon landings and the subsequent disintegration of the NKPA resulted in a victorious euphoria that led Macarthur to push to the Yalu and Willoughby to support it in his analysis.

Despite these reports and other similar indications of Chinese troop dispositions, validated through multiple sources, the FEC G2 directorate continued to experience significant fluctuation in its analysis of the Chinese situation. The inconsistency in analysis reduced their analytical credibility and possibly Willoughby's confidence in his ability to provide an accurate assessment of Chinese intent. By the end of September,

there was no doubt in the Far East Command or in Washington that the PLA was increasing its military capacity in Manchuria, yet there was much debate as to what the Chinese intended to do with the force that they were building. In addition to numerous reports that the Chinese Communists were increasing their readiness, conflicting information suggested that the Chinese had already committed forces inside North Korea. This lack of clarity significantly complicated the FEC G2's ability to accurately predict Chinese Communist intentions as UN forces prepared to attack north of the 38th Parallel. In his September 30 intelligence summary, Willoughby reported that at a conference on August 14, China decided to provide 250,000 troops for combat operations in Korea.⁸⁶ This information likely originated with the Chinese Nationalist Ministry of Defense G2, which often provided reporting from its sources on the Chinese mainland.⁸⁷ Only three days later, Willoughby's intelligence staff reported some evidence that twenty Chinese divisions were in North Korea and had been there since September 10, before the Inchon landings. The DIS published on October 3 directly addressed the increasingly belligerent words coming from the Chinese leaders. In this report, Willoughby acknowledged Zhou En-Lai's warning on September 30th by stating, "Even though the utterances are a form of propaganda they cannot be fully ignored since they emit from presumably responsible leaders in the Chinese and North Korean Communist governments."⁸⁸

Willoughby's analysis in the first week of October 1950 demonstrates that he understood Chinese capabilities and the implications of the Mao's proclamations. By October 5, the FEC G2 highlighted the potential that nine PLA divisions were in North Korea, and that continued reporting of Chinese activity had a "sinister connotation" and concluded that the Chinese could intervene in the war if the UN Forces cross the 38th

Parallel.⁸⁹ The disparity in the numbers of Chinese divisions assessed to be in North Korea from twenty on October 2 to nine only three days later highlights the wide variance in reporting and should have raised questions as to the veracity of Willoughby's sources. On this day, the FEC G2 named its primary priority intelligence requirement as, "Reinforcement by Soviet Satellite China." Unfortunately for the men of the Eighth Army and X Corps, now forging north across the inter-Korean border, Willoughby's analysis in the coming weeks would downplay the implications of a possible Chinese Communist entry into the Korean War.

Despite the ominous tone of the FEC G2's analysis of the Communist military build-up in Manchuria in late September and early October, Willoughby deliberately set out to discredit the reporting he received from the field. MacArthur's successful landings at Inchon, combined with the Eighth Army's breakout from the Pusan Perimeter rapidly changed the nature of the Korean War by the end of September. As the American and South Korean forces pursued the North Korean People's Army across the 38th Parallel on October 1, the Far East Command G2 section's estimates became increasingly dismissive of Chinese Communist intentions to intervene, despite mounting evidence that the Chinese would enter the conflict.

While Willoughby's primary intelligence requirement in the first week of October addressed, "Reinforcement by Soviet Satellite China," by October 13, this requirement dropped to the FEC's third intelligence priority until the Wake Island Conference two days later. Only after President Truman and several of his chief foreign policy assistants directly asked General MacArthur of his thoughts about China's bellicose statements did

Willoughby elevate the Chinese reinforcement warning problem back to the FEC's top intelligence priority.⁹⁰

Indications that the danger to the UN Command continued to increase as the U.S. and South Korean troops attacked into North Korea. In Willoughby's Daily Intelligence Summary published on October 7, he cited a report by an unnamed American officer, who had escaped captivity in North Korea, had been interrogated by three Soviet officers. These Soviets allegedly told him that if U.S. forces crossed the 38th Parallel, that "New communist forces would enter the war in support of North Korea."⁹¹ Only four days earlier, Zhou En-Lai issued his statement to Dr. Pannikar that China would intervene if U.S. forces advanced north of the 38th Parallel. The former POW's report should have served as another indication that MacArthur's plans to advance to the Yalu threatened to change the strategic nature of the war.

Reports of Chinese troop movements and improvements to military infrastructure in Manchuria continued in the second week of October. Analysis published by the FEC G2 section between 8 and 14 October dismissed them, stating that, "no conclusive evidence" of Chinese troops in North Korea existed. Willoughby's assessments regarded the Chinese warnings by Zhou En-Lai as "probably in the category of diplomatic blackmail."⁹² He then declined in the October 14 DIS further judgment by claiming, "The decision, if any, is beyond the purview of collective intelligence: it is a decision for war, on the highest level."⁹³ This report followed with an estimate that 24 PLA divisions were postured at crossing points on the Yalu River.⁹⁴ At this moment, Willoughby transitioned from warning of the growing Chinese threat in Manchuria to deliberately dismissing the Chinese leadership's repeated warnings to the Americans as well as

reporting from his own sources. The CIA's October 12 National Intelligence Estimate, "Critical Situations in the Far East," echoed Willoughby's sentiment that the Chinese Communist had missed the decisive point to enter the Korean War: "From a military standpoint, the most favorable time for intervention in Korea has passed."⁹⁵

On October 15, Willoughby and MacArthur flew to Wake Island to meet with President Truman and his senior advisors in order to brief MacArthur's plan to rapidly conclude the war in Korea by attacking to the Yalu. The reversal of Willoughby's analysis of the Chinese threat at this time coincided directly with the Wake meeting and any assessment other than one refuting the possibility of Chinese intervention would have scuttled MacArthur's plan. Willoughby did not provide an alternate assessment that showed how the UN Command's advances into North Korea had significantly shortened potential Chinese Communist lines of operation, or the monumental terrain and weather challenges that faced MacArthur as his forces pushed on to the Yalu.

Willoughby's retreat from his advice to heed warnings from the Chinese Communists in late September to his assessment that the Chinese troop buildup in Manchuria had a "sinister connotation" on October 5 was undoubtedly influenced by the overwhelming success that the UN forces on the peninsula were experiencing, as well as increased pressure from Washington to rapidly conclude the war. In the face of multiple indicators in the coming weeks, Willoughby's denial of Chinese intentions continued to grow.

Following the Wake Island Conference on October 15, Willoughby's assessments increasingly supported MacArthur's plans to push his forces to the Yalu River in order to quickly end the war in Korea. This trend occurred in spite of multiple indications that the

Chinese Communists had either already moved combat forces into North Korea or were prepared to do so on limited notice. Willoughby's October 20 intelligence summary described reliable reporting that China had alerted 400,000 soldiers in border crossing areas in Manchuria to cross into North Korea.⁹⁶ The FEC G2 issued this report on the same day that MacArthur's headquarters issued CINCFE "Operations Plan 202" which detailed post combat operations.⁹⁷ "Operations Plan 202" detailed the movement of the Eighth Army to Japan and the deployment of one U.S. Army division to Europe as early as December, 1950. This plan corresponded directly with requests made by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General of the Army Omar Bradley, five days earlier at Wake Island.

The FEC G2's most damning dismissal of Chinese Communist intent occurred in the Daily Intelligence Summary issued on October 28, 1950. The report declared:

From a tactical standpoint, with victorious United States divisions in full deployment, it would appear that the auspicious time for intervention has long since passed; it is difficult to believe that such a move, if planned, would have been postponed to a time when remnant North Korean Forces have been reduced to a low point of effectiveness.⁹⁸

Willoughby here demonstrates mirror imaging as he assessed the Chinese intent from the perspective of the apparent strength of the UN Command in the field. His assessment also ignores the 1st ROK Division's confrontation with a superior enemy force three days earlier, several prisoners who identified themselves as Chinese soldiers, and the enemy displaying significantly improved capabilities. However, in *MacArthur: 1941-1951*, Willoughby cited the "October 28 Daily Intelligence Summary" assessing that over 300,000 Chinese soldiers were positioned in Manchuria, but amazingly omits this analysis.⁹⁹ This passage is a clear example where Willoughby attempted to re-write

history in his favor. By November 13, fully three weeks after the initial Chinese contact with South Korean forces on October 25, Willoughby's assessments claimed that only 80,000 Chinese Communist forces lay between MacArthur's advancing Army and the Yalu River.

Willoughby's virtual monopoly over intelligence operations in the Far East directly contributed to a lack of independent analysis and assessment throughout the national level intelligence community. Congressional hearings over the relief of General MacArthur emphasized the circular nature of Korean War intelligence reporting. H.A. DeWeerd wrote in *Strategic Surprise*:

It was clear from Secretary of State Acheson's testimony that most intelligence material regarding Korea actually came from Tokyo. This information apparently went into the hoppers of the State Department and the CIA and then was sent back to MacArthur's headquarters with other intelligence material.¹⁰⁰

Despite his October 28 dismissal of PLA intent, Willoughby's report to the Army G2 on October 31 admitted that the UN Command had captured twenty-eight Chinese prisoners. He further detailed the results of the interrogations that identified elements of the Chinese Communist Forty-Second and Fortieth Field Armies in the mountains of North Korea.¹⁰¹ The CIA's Daily Korean Situation update report issued on the 31st is virtually identical to Willoughby's analysis, making it probable that the CIA based its analysis purely off reporting from the FEC G2.¹⁰²

The November 3 report from Willoughby's intelligence section warned that although up to 34,000 Chinese had likely crossed the Yalu, over 415,000 more troops were capable of launching a "large scale counteroffensive at any time."¹⁰³ Coinciding with this warning, The FEC G2's report to the Army G2 noted that, "Friendly air has observed considerable enemy vehicular traffic crossing the Yalu River into Korea."¹⁰⁴

Although this warning prompted MacArthur to request authority to bomb bridges spanning the Yalu with B-29s,¹⁰⁵ it did not dissuade him from planning his final push to the Manchurian border, set to commence three weeks later. MacArthur eventually received permission to attack the international bridges linking Korea and Manchuria on November 8, one week after the Chinese Communists mauled the 8th Cavalry at Unsan.

On the night of November 7, Willoughby reported to the Army G2 that cross border traffic was significantly increasing: “Very heavy traffic was sighted moving southeastwardly from the Yalu River. Of approximately 750 vehicles, the majority were moving out of Sakchu.”¹⁰⁶ During this time, U.S. Air Force reporting described a significant increase in opposition to the raids by Russian built MiG-15 jet fighters operating from the Chinese side of the border.¹⁰⁷ In air battles over Sinuiju, North Korea adjacent to Manchuria’s Antung, American fighter pilots reported combat with multiple flights of MiG-15 jet fighters, observing that they retreated north across the Yalu River.¹⁰⁸ The CIA’s analysis in its October 12 report listed a lack of air assets as one of the primary reasons why the Chinese would not be capable of intervening in Korea. Willoughby’s analysis at this time did not address the fact that the UN Command was now fighting an enemy equipped with the most advanced jet fighters in the Communist inventory.

By the second week in November, Willoughby acknowledged increased Chinese forces massing in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, a major threat to Almond’s X Corps, and recognized this new enemy force’s potential to “seize the initiative and launch offensive operations.”¹⁰⁹ In his report on November 10, Willoughby cited a Chinese officer, captured by UN forces, describing how the PLA 38th Army infiltrated into Korea

on October 20 and had changed its unit designation to the “54th Unit” as a security measure.¹¹⁰ On November 11, the FEC G2 estimate for PLA troops deployed in Korea rose to 76,800.¹¹¹ Willoughby’s concerns about the Chinese threat to X Corps on November 17th rose to a crescendo, citing at least 10,000 enemy troops to the west of Almond’s exposed western flank as well as four divisions waiting for the Marines near Chosin.¹¹² These concerns may have been overshadowed by the excitement created as elements of X Corps’ 7th Infantry Division reached the Yalu four days later, bringing accolades from the Corps Commander Ned Almond and MacArthur.

Willoughby’s assessments continued to acknowledge increasing numbers of Chinese forces deployed in Korea by the second week of November, but he significantly underestimated their strength and continued to avoid making an assessment as to what course of action the Chinese would take. In his November 13 report to the Department of the Army, Willoughby accurately identified elements of four Chinese armies in North Korea (Thirty-Eighth, Thirty-Ninth, Fortieth and Forty-Second), yet he only accounted for the troop strength for the specific units identified by the Chinese prisoners.

Willoughby’s report stated that the PLA armies in Korea were only, “Composite units of token forces.” In this regard, if only one division was identified in Korea out of a PLA Army which normally had three divisions in its order of battle, Willoughby only counted the troops from that single division. At no point in the November 13 assessment did Willoughby either acknowledge that the numbers of Chinese forces could be inaccurate or make a determination of what their objective might be.¹¹³ Due to this method of analysis, Willoughby accounted for only one third of Chinese Communist troops inside North Korea at that time.

On November 24, Walton Walker's Eighth Army initiated its attack north to the Yalu. On the night of November 25, over two hundred thousand Chinese soldiers launched a counter-offensive that devastated the ROK II Corps and nearly destroyed the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division.¹¹⁴ Almond's X Corps' attack to reach the Yalu launched from the southern shore of the Chosin Reservoir on the morning of November 27. By the end of the next day, the PLA had cut off the 1st Marine Division and the 31st Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division, beginning an epic chapter in American military history.¹¹⁵

Despite major contact between Eighth Army units and PLA troops in vicinity of the Chongchon River and X Corps' identification of three Chinese divisions in its area of operations by the first week of November, conclusions about Chinese intent in Korea remained elusive at the operational level. On both fronts, this mystery was further complicated when PLA units broke contact in the second week of November and withdrew into the mountains north of the UN forces' advance. Willoughby's report to the Department of the Army G2 on November 10 describes the Eighth Army front as quiet while the X Corps reported only light contact. He admitted that he did not know the intent of the Chinese intervention at that time:

The reason or reasons for withdrawal [Noting the PLA had broken contact] are not known; however, pending clarification, it is assumed that the enemy is regrouping preparatory to the resumption of [UN] offensive action. It is believed by FECOM that it is too early to draw definite conclusions concerning the present actual scope of PLA intervention in North Korea.¹¹⁶

In the following days, the lack of contact with enemy forces continued to reinforce Willoughby's assessment that the Chinese Communists were withdrawing to the border region. The Eighth Army War Diary on November 12 continued to reflect a

decrease in enemy resistance in its sector, in front of its lead element element, I Corps.¹¹⁷

X Corps encountered a similar reduction in enemy activity, which obscured Chinese intentions. On November 18, the X Corps G2 reported, “the enemy’s recent delaying operations are apparently concluded and he is once again withdrawing to the north.”¹¹⁸ For Willoughby and MacArthur, this report supported their intent to finish the drive to the Yalu.

Charles Willoughby correctly identified the Chinese Communist troop buildup in Manchuria as early as late July 1950, yet deliberately dismissed evidence that those forces had entered Korea in force and denied public Chinese warnings that they would do so. The FEC G2 added specific caveats to his own analysis that led the CIA, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Truman administration to believe that while the Chinese had the capability to enter the Korean War, they would not do so on a decisive scale because the most advantageous time for them to do so had passed. Willoughby’s deliberate suppression of independent analysis and centralization of intelligence reporting on Korea denied senior U.S. leaders in Washington any other points of view. This institutional breakdown was based on Willoughby’s experiences in World War II and the environment that General MacArthur fostered within his headquarters.

¹Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao and the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 179. Note: October 3, 1950:

²Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 163.

³*Ibid.*, 159.

⁴James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 197.

- ⁵Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 197.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, 197.
- ⁷Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 179.
- ⁸*Ibid.*, 170.
- ⁹Jerry N. Hess, "Oral History Interview with Roger Tubby," *Truman Library*, February 10, 1970, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/tubby.htm#93> (accessed October 12, 2008).
- ¹⁰Robert Accinelli, *Oral History Interview with John F. Melby* (November 21, 1986).
- ¹¹H.A. DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise in the Korean War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1962), 23.
- ¹²Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 233.
- ¹³Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 197.
- ¹⁴DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise*, 23.
- ¹⁵CIA, "Probability of Direct Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea; 8 September," *Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, September 8, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008).
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, 2
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, 3
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, 3
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, 3
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, 3.
- ²¹Antung is located in Manchuria and is one of the primary crossing points over the Yalu River into North Korea.
- ²²*Ibid.*, 3-4.
- ²³*Ibid.*, 3.
- ²⁴CIA, "Probability of Direct Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea; 8 September," *Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading*

Room, September 8, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008), 3.

²⁵Ibid., 4.

²⁶CIA, "Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room," *Situations in the Far East*, October 12, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008), 4.

²⁷Ibid., 3.

²⁸Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 230.

²⁹Department of the Army, G2. "Joint Daily SITREP No. 125." (Washington, DC, November 1, 1950).

³⁰CIA, "Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room," *Situations in the Far East*, October 12, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008), 3.

³¹William Manchester, *American Caesar* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1978), 579.

³²Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 194.

³³CIA, "Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room," *Situations in the Far East*, October 12, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008), 3.

³⁴Ibid., 3.

³⁵Ibid., 3.

³⁶CIA, "Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room," *Situations in the Far East*, October 12, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008).

³⁷Department of the Army, G2, "Joint Daily SITREP No. 125" (Washington, DC, November 1, 1950).

³⁸CIA, "Memorandum For the President," *Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea* (Washington DC, November 1, 1950).

³⁹CIA, "Chinese Communist Intervention in Korea: 8 November," *Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, November 8, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008), 4.

- ⁴⁰Ibid., 1.
- ⁴¹Ibid., 7.
- ⁴²Ibid., 7.
- ⁴³Robert Leckie, *Conflict: History of the Korean War, 1950-53* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1962), 177.
- ⁴⁴David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 13.
- ⁴⁵Eighth United States Army, "G2 Staff Section Report," *Headquarters Eighth United States Army Korea War Diary*, October 26, 1950.
- ⁴⁶Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 14.
- ⁴⁷HQ, USAK G-2, 164th Military Intelligence Service Detachment, "Prisoner of War Reinterrogation Report 164-MISDI-1165," October 26, 1950.
- ⁴⁸Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 14.
- ⁴⁹HQ, USAK G-2, 164th Military Intelligence Service Detachment, "Prisoner of War Reinterrogation Report 164-MISDI-1165," October 26, 1950.
- ⁵⁰Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 15.
- ⁵¹Ibid., 15.
- ⁵²Ibid., 15.
- ⁵³Headquarters, Eighth United States Army Korea (EUSAK), "G2 Staff Section Report," *Headquarters Eighth United States Army Korea War Diary*, October 26, 1950.
- ⁵⁴The Eighth Army's direct support Military Intelligence organization
- ⁵⁵This equates to an under strength armor battalion.
- ⁵⁶HQ, USAK G-2, 164th Military Intelligence Service Detachment, "Prisoner of War Reinterrogation Report 164-MISDI-1165," October 26, 1950.
- ⁵⁷Robert Accinelli, "Oral History Interview with John F. Melby (November 21, 1986)."
- ⁵⁸Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 18.
- ⁵⁹HQ, EUSAK, G-2, 164th Military Intelligence Service Detachment, "Prisoner of War Preliminary Interrogation Report #164-MISD-1177," November 2, 1950.

⁶⁰CIA, “Daily Korean Summary 30 October 1950,” (Washington DC, October 30, 1950).

⁶¹Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 13.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 13.

⁶³Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 124” (Washington, DC, October 31, 1950), 2.

⁶⁴Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 23.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁶Leckie, *Conflict*, 180.

⁶⁷Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 24.

⁶⁸Headquarters, Eighth United States Army (EUSAK), “G2 Staff Section Report,” *Headquarters, Eighth United States Army (EUSAK) War Diary*, November 12, 1950.

⁶⁹Headquarters, Eighth United States Army (EUSAK) G3, “Headquarters, Eighth United States Army (EUSAK) War Diary,” November 2, 1950.

⁷⁰Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 43.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 383.

⁷²Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 233.

⁷³Roy E. Appleman, *The U.S. Army In the Korean War: South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu* (Washington: United States Army Center of Military History, 1986), 686

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 687.

⁷⁵Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 755.

⁷⁶Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 124” (Washington, DC, October 31, 1950).

⁷⁷Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 733.

⁷⁸Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 198.

⁷⁹A PLA Army was the rough equivalent of a U.S. Division

⁸⁰Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 758.

- ⁸¹*Ibid.*, 758.
- ⁸²Charles A. Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 385.
- ⁸³Goncharov, Lewis, and Litai, *Uncertain Partners*, 159.
- ⁸⁴Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 199.
- ⁸⁵Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 758.
- ⁸⁶Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 758.
- ⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 758.
- ⁸⁸Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 199-200.
- ⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 200.
- ⁹⁰Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 759.
- ⁹¹*Ibid.*, 759.
- ⁹²Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 200.
- ⁹³Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 759.
- ⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 759.
- ⁹⁵CIA, "Critical Situations in the Far East; 12 October," *Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, October 12, 1950, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp (accessed September 13, 2008).
- ⁹⁶Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 222.
- ⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 222.
- ⁹⁸Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 234.
- ⁹⁹Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 386.
- ¹⁰⁰DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise*, 7.
- ¹⁰¹Department of the Army, G2, "Joint Daily SITREP No. 124" (Washington, DC, October 31, 1950).
- ¹⁰²Central Intelligence Agency, "Daily Korean Summary 31 October 1950," (Washington DC, October 31, 1950).

¹⁰³Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 241.

¹⁰⁴Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 127” (Washington, DC, November 3, 1950).

¹⁰⁵The JCS disapproved this request on President Truman’s instructions to avoid provoking China.

¹⁰⁶A sub-department of Pyongang Province situated on the south bank of the Yalu River.

¹⁰⁷Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 247.

¹⁰⁸Department of the Army G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 130” (Washington, DC, November 8, 1950).

¹⁰⁹Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 259.

¹¹⁰Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 132” (Washington, DC, November 10, 1950).

¹¹¹Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 259.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 264.

¹¹³Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 133” (Washington, DC, November 13, 1950).

¹¹⁴Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 143” (Washington, DC, November 28, 1950).

¹¹⁵Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 274.

¹¹⁶Department of the Army, G2, “Joint Daily SITREP No. 132” (Washington, DC, November 10, 1950).

¹¹⁷Headquarters, Eighth United States Army (EUSAK), “G2 Staff Section Report,” *Headquarters, Eighth United States Army (EUSAK) War Diary*, November 12, 1950.

¹¹⁸Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 756.

CHAPTER 3

INSTITUTIONAL DYSFUNCTION

It has taken my undivided personal attention to midnight, daily since June 25, to maintain standardization of the product . . . Note that special emphasis is placed on the direct personal supervision of T/INTEL by the ACoS, G-2¹

— Major General Charles A. Willoughby describing his personal involvement in the production of the daily FEC Intelligence Summary.

Charles Willoughby's supervision ensured that he maintained direct personal control over the Far East Command's intelligence analysis in the Pacific theater as well as Washington's understanding of the Chinese threat in Korea. His G2 directorate processed and produced multiple reports coalesced from field reporting and analysis from the Eighth Army and X Corps, yet these assessments did not reflect the reality of what was happening on the ground in Korea. Washington's dependence upon Willoughby and MacArthur to provide situational awareness of the Korean War limited the ability of senior military and civilian leaders to provide MacArthur with appropriate guidance and direction. If Willoughby possessed detailed information providing Chinese intent, preparations for war and finally, tactical confirmation, what institutional factors contributed to his faulty assessment that the Chinese Communists would not intervene in North Korea in November 1950?

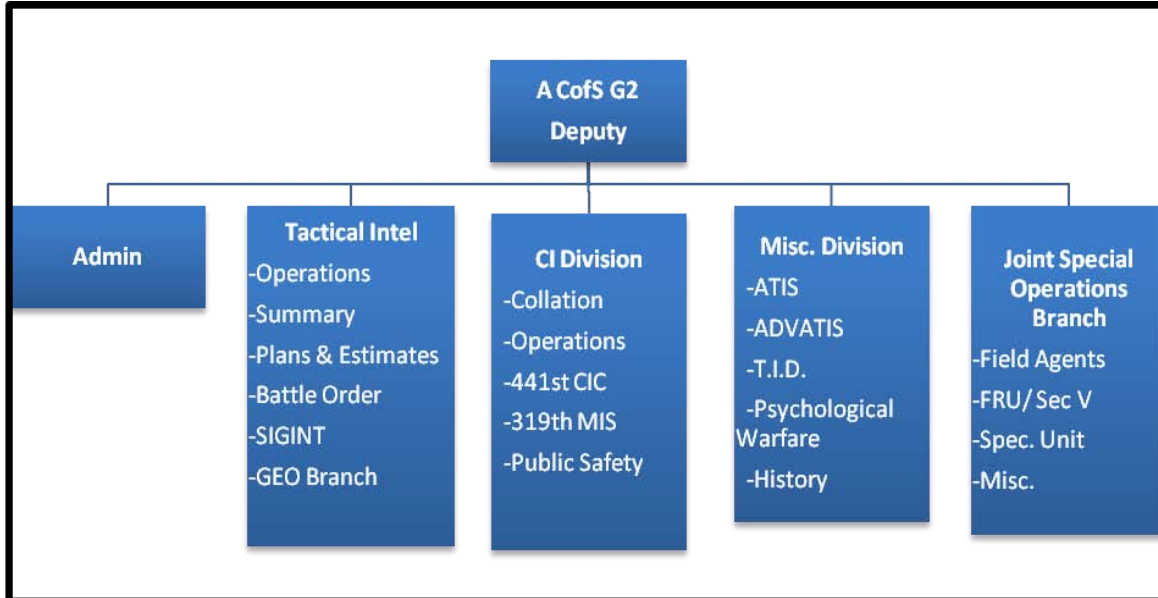
Willoughby's personal control over intelligence reporting and analysis significantly limited independent analysis and competing hypotheses. This control grew out of the command climate in the FEC headquarters that rewarded insiders who demonstrated complete loyalty to MacArthur and isolated outsiders. Operational success after Inchon drove the mid-October change in Willoughby's analysis from warning of

Chinese capabilities to his dismissal of indications of their offensive intentions. The United Nations Command's successful pursuit of the NKPA north of the 38th Parallel led to institutional haste, which magnified these faults in rapidly seeking to end the war in Korea regardless of the enemy situation.

The Inchon landings, UN forces crossing the 38th Parallel, and the Wake Island Conference illustrate how institutional friction directly influenced tactical, operational and strategic assessments and decision making. General Willoughby, arguably the most influential member of MacArthur's staff, was intimately involved in each of these situations. Each case study shows how Willoughby and MacArthur discouraged independent analysis and critiques, while at the same time solidifying their strategic goals at the expense of Washington.

Willoughby organized the Military Intelligence Section, Far East Command, on the same template as his organization from World War II.² He established roles and responsibilities in accordance with the current doctrine at the time, FM 101-5.³ Willoughby's primary concern at the outbreak of hostilities in June, 1950, was the lack of experienced personnel due to demobilization after the Japanese surrender in 1945.⁴ This weakness was pervasive throughout the United States intelligence community, particularly in the area of signals intelligence specialists and linguists.⁵ As the war progressed, he adjusted the G2 directorate, adding specialized sections for signals intelligence and a research unit focused on troop movements and Prisoner of War reporting. This was in reaction to Willoughby's assessment that there had been unsatisfactory performance those areas.⁶

Table 1. FEC G2 Organization



Source: Charles A. Willoughby, "Office Memorandum No. 44," *Organization of the Daily Summary; Reorganization of C/P and Executive Group* (Tokyo: GHQ, FEC Military Intelligence Section, September 1, 1950).

Willoughby clearly saw the Tactical Intelligence Division (T/Intel) as the G2 section's main effort. Prior to the North Korean invasion, T/Intel had been responsible for monitoring developments on the Asian mainland, with the exception of the Korean Peninsula. Responsibility for intelligence operations in Korea prior to the North's invasion on June 25 fell under the U.S. Military Advisory Group in Seoul. As soon as MacArthur's headquarters assumed responsibilities for directing operations in Korea, Willoughby became responsible for all intelligence operations on the peninsula. G2 Office Memorandum No. 41, issued on July 25, 1950, demonstrates Willoughby's keen interest in the T/Intel division: "Note that special emphasis is placed on the direct personal supervision of T/Intel by the ACofS, G2 [Willoughby]."⁷ This division's most important function was producing the Daily Intelligence Summary (DIS). The DIS

provided the G2's current intelligence assessment to multiple agencies. Willoughby's deputy, Colonel Rufus S. Bratton, described its importance: "Around it revolves the entire system of publicity of GHQ: i.e., the Public Information Officer (PIO) daily releases, the transient Communiqués, the daily Washington SITREP, the daily telecom, etc."⁸

Willoughby viewed the DIS as critical report that required his personal supervision. In a September 1 memo Willoughby described how he personally had to intervene and edit the Daily Intelligence Summaries. He also complained that no graduates of the Command General and Staff School or Staff College were available to produce the daily report.⁹ With the DIS providing the foundation for the CIA's daily Korean Summary and the Department of the Army G2's Joint Daily Situation Report, Willoughby's personal analysis heavily influenced the information available to decision makers in Washington.

The intelligence reporting structure during the first five months the Korean War heavily weighted Willoughby's assessments at the operational and strategic levels due to his personal control over the Daily Intelligence Summaries. The vast majority of intelligence reporting and analysis that senior military and political officials in Washington received came from Willoughby and his directorate. Army Chief of Staff, General Lawton Collins estimated that Willoughby was the source of up to 90 percent of the intelligence products that the Pentagon used to develop strategic plans and policy.¹⁰ This reliance ensured that Willoughby's analysis permeated the Pentagon as well as the Central Intelligence Agency.

Willoughby's G2 section provided intelligence updates to the Department of the Army in daily teleconferences. During these updates, Willoughby or his subordinates provided his assessment of the intelligence situation on the Korean Peninsula to General Collins and his intelligence staff.¹¹ Willoughby's daily reports constituted the majority of the intelligence reporting and analysis included in the Joint Daily Situation Report (SITREP), published by the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, United States Army, on a daily basis. In addition to daily teleconferences with the Pentagon, Willoughby published the Daily Intelligence Summary in hard copy. Willoughby sent these reports via courier to Washington, arriving several days after he presented his analysis in the morning teleconferences.¹²

In addition to Willoughby's assessments providing the bulk of intelligence for officials in the Pentagon, the Central Intelligence Agency almost entirely derived its Daily Korean Summary from the FEC G2's analysis. The CIA provided further analysis in the form of Intelligence Memoranda and National Intelligence Estimates. These were the CIA's primary analytical products aimed to support national level decision making, and were also disseminated to the Far East Command and to senior leaders in Washington. The Central Intelligence Agency fused reporting from its own sources with Willoughby's information in order to develop its own analysis for senior leaders and staff personnel at the strategic level.¹³ Willoughby's analysis dominated intelligence available to MacArthur as well as to leaders at the national level, due to the Army's dependence upon the FEC G2 for information and the CIA's reflection of Willoughby's analysis in that agency's reports.

Immediately after the North Korean invasion in June 1950, MacArthur's headquarters became directly responsible for producing intelligence coming from reporting on the Korean peninsula. H. A. DeWeerd observed in 1962 that intelligence on the Korean War was almost exclusively Willoughby's domain:

His daily intelligence reports to the Department of the Army constituted the main source of information on the capabilities and intentions of the Chinese Communist forces in regard to Korea. The implications of these reports were summarized *some time after* the events described in his biweekly reports to the United Nations on military operations in Korea. These reports built a convincing picture of Chinese communist *capability* to intervene in North Korea in the autumn of 1950. The situation regarding *intentions* was far less clear, but intelligence on enemy intention is never clear.¹⁴

Willoughby would later write in his book, *MacArthur, 1941-1951*, that determining enemy intent was beyond his capabilities. This statement belies the fact that he did, in fact, provide his assessment of Chinese intent on multiple occasions, as recorded in the FEC G2's Daily Intelligence Summaries, most notably the October 28th DIS when he dismissed China's intentions to decisively enter the war based on the success of the UN Command at the time. Despite multiple public statements from the Chinese Communist leadership that indicated that China would commit forces if UN troops crossed the 38th Parallel, and despite reporting from the field that supported those indications, Willoughby failed to predict that the Communists would conduct a decisive counteroffensive.

MacArthur's HQ provided the UN with reports on war activities every two weeks. Since MacArthur's staff issued these reports after the period of time they covered (in some cases several weeks), the FEC staff was able to manipulate them to MacArthur's advantage. An example of this is the command's report to the UN on November 6 (covering the last two weeks of October) that acknowledged Chinese forces were in

Korea but did not draw any decisive conclusions.¹⁵ In this report, Willoughby failed to make an assessment based on multiple battles with Chinese forces to date, including the 1st ROK Division's initial contact on October 25 and reporting from Chinese prisoners taken by the 1st Cavalry Division prior to November 1.

MacArthur's headquarters did not issue its next report to the UN for another fifty-one days, a silence that covered the critical period of 1-15 November. This timeframe included the initial contact between U.S. troops and the Chinese Communist Forces at Unsan, resulting in the defeat of the 8th Cavalry as well as the identification of Chinese units in the X Corps area of operations. The report to the UN claimed that the close proximity of the Chinese sanctuary in Manchuria to the battlefield prevented adequate reconnaissance, leading as a justification for the surprise attacks by the Chinese forces on the Chongchon River.¹⁶ This report does not accurately reflect the fact that U.S. aerial reconnaissance reporting, as early as October 18, identified Chinese forces massing on the Korean border to include nearly 100 Soviet fighter planes.¹⁷ Willoughby's report to the Army G2 on November 3 also reported a significant increase in vehicle traffic from China into North Korea.¹⁸

In a further example of Willoughby providing inaccurate reporting to the UN, MacArthur's headquarters issued its 9th and 10th reports on the same day, December 27th, 1950. While the 9th report, covering 16-30 November, was inconclusive, the 10th report covering the next two weeks highlighted that twenty-one Chinese divisions had intervened in the war.¹⁹ The 10th report to the UN presented MacArthur's failed offensive in a positive light, saying that the UN attack "successfully developed and revealed the strength and intentions of the Chinese communists."²⁰ MacArthur further

justified pressing the attack on November 24 by proclaiming that it was a reconnaissance in force, which prompted the PLA to attack prematurely.²¹ Willoughby used the same argument in *MacArthur, 1941-1951* to explain the purpose of the UN Command offensive.

MacArthur's Far East Command Headquarters was an insular organization that rewarded a compliant group of insiders, discouraged divergent thought and blocked outside influences. MacArthur built his staff primarily with officers who had been part of his World War II command and had stayed in Japan during the post-war occupation. Charles Willoughby typified MacArthur's closest advisors: he had been with the general since his days on Bataan, readily espoused radical right wing political views, and remained intensely loyal to MacArthur in all that he did. Paul H. Nitze, Director, Policy Planning Staff, U.S. Department of State, noted that Willoughby was a trusted member of MacArthur's inner circle. He further provided his thoughts on the environment within the FEC Headquarters: "Some of the other people that were on MacArthur's staff were kind of right wing sycophants, colonels in his office."²² Willoughby's own words support Nitze's opinion. In describing the effects of Chinese rhetoric threatening to intervene if UN troops crossed the 38th Parallel, he later wrote: "Communist supporters and dupes promptly yielded to this blackmail."²³ In this outburst, Willoughby refers to leaders in Washington, who, in his opinion, did nothing to deter Mao from becoming involved in Korea.

The FEC command climate significantly influenced the Command's relationships with its subordinate units as well as with critical agencies in Washington, to include the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department.

MacArthur did not seek or encourage outside opinions, particularly those from the Joint Chiefs. In the planning leading up to the landings at Inchon, MacArthur did not keep the service chiefs informed of the development of his operation. He submitted no campaign plan aside from requisitions for forces, and passed along only the bare outline of his plans.²⁴

The planning for Operation Chromite, decision making to cross the 38th Parallel, and the Wake Island Conference demonstrate the significant institutional friction that would later complicate the Chinese intervention intelligence problem. An additional institutional factor that influenced MacArthur's decision to launch his doomed November offensive was the pervasive belief by nearly all agencies in October 1950 that the war was in its terminal phase.

Significant difficulties in communication, coordination and cooperation marked the relationship between Willoughby's G2 section and the Central Intelligence Agency. These difficulties stemmed from Willoughby's demand since the earliest days of World War II for control over all intelligence reporting and analysis within MacArthur's area of responsibility. Willoughby favored centralized control over intelligence activities based on his World War II experience.²⁵ This centralized control ensured that Washington heard only his and MacArthur's points of view.

The FEC G2's stranglehold over intelligence operations during the Korean War significantly affected the CIA's ability to conduct independent analysis. General Walter Bedell Smith, the new director of Central Intelligence, complained about General Willoughby's attitude in cooperating on intelligence matters, a critical issue since the preponderance of American intelligence in the Far East came from Willoughby's

sources.²⁶ Smith, appointed as the Director of Central Intelligence in early October, likely relied upon Willoughby's analysis on Korea to make up for his lack of experience in Asia. Smith's experience as the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union provided him personal knowledge of the Soviet threat and may have held his attention even after he assumed control of the CIA. Bedell Smith's and the CIA's world view at the time saw an increasingly aggressive monolithic Communist threat with the potential for escalation into the next world war.²⁷

The CIA's lead officer for the Korean theater in the summer of 1950 was Jack Singlaub, a former OSS agent with extensive experience in China. Singlaub's Korean operatives provided accurate reporting detailing North Korean preparations for the June invasion, but he still struggled to gain influence with the FEC G2.²⁸ Had the CIA and the FEC G2 directorate had a cooperative relationship, Singlaub's Chinese experience and agent network would have provided an excellent source of competing analysis and assessments to MacArthur's command. The lack of cooperation between Willoughby and the CIA resulted in uncoordinated intelligence operations and circular analysis in which the CIA's assessments reflected Willoughby's analysis.

The faulty relationship between the Far East Command and the Central Intelligence Agency was due to MacArthur's and Willoughby's complete distrust for the CIA.²⁹ Willoughby cites in his 1954 book, *MacArthur 1941-1951*, a CIA report mailed to his directorate on November 21, which indicated that the Chinese would not intervene in Korea on a major scale.³⁰ He uses this incident as an accusation that the CIA did not provide strategic indications and warning of the impending attack. Willoughby did not address the fact that the relationship between his organization and the CIA was so poor

that CIA Director General Bedell Smith personally visited with Willoughby in Tokyo in January, 1951. An internal State Department memo described Smith's trip to Japan as a last ditch effort to coordinate intelligence operations in the Far East: "an endeavor to accomplish something with General MacArthur and General Willoughby which will make it possible for CIA to play some role in the intelligence field in General MacArthur's theatre."³¹ In his accusations against the CIA, Willoughby may have been correct, in that his own efforts to control intelligence reporting from Korea resulted in an elimination of competing analysis and hypotheses. Thus, CIA reports mirrored Willoughby's faulty assessment that the Chinese would not intervene because they had passed on the most advantageous times when the UN Command was most vulnerable in September.³²

The United States Department of State experienced many of the same difficulties that the Central Intelligence Agency encountered in developing and executing policy in Asia in conjunction with MacArthur's Far East Command. Extensive issues between MacArthur's headquarters and the State Department arose in the wake of the Japanese surrender in August 1945. These issues eventually manifested themselves in the public policy disputes between MacArthur and the Truman administration, resulting in the general's relief in the spring of 1951. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Director of North East Asian Affairs, described MacArthur's reaction to the State Department's deployment of a senior representative to Japan in late 1945:

The whole idea of a 'political advisor' to MacArthur was very ill-received. But, of course, he had no choice, really but to accept it. George Atcheson did come out, and they put him over in a building well removed from headquarters and he had his staff . . . He could never get any independent communications; communications all had to go through MacArthur.³³

Johnson's observations echoed those of CIA operative Jack Singlaub's descriptions of the FEC Headquarters' corporate feelings towards outsiders. Johnson further explained:

MacArthur and the headquarters looked upon everybody outside of the immediate coterie as an enemy or a potential enemy, and this included his own commanders. I got along because I represented no threat; I could be helpful.³⁴

Willoughby, like Alexis Johnson, was of use to MacArthur in that he had given the general unquestioning loyalty for nearly a decade as his G2. The intense distrust and dysfunctional relationship between MacArthur and his inner circle towards the State Department manifested themselves in November 1950, as officials in Washington became increasingly wary of Chinese Communist intentions. Paul Nitze reflected:

There were five weeks between the time when there was the first evidence that the Chinese Communists might have intervened to the time when they pulled the string at the Chongchon River. It was five weeks that we were getting all these messages from General MacArthur that everything was going fine when, in fact, from where we sat it didn't look as though it was going fine.³⁵

This statement reinforces Washington's dependence upon Willoughby's intelligence assessments for decision making. While it is clear that all parties involved understood that a massive Chinese force was building just north of the Yalu River, Willoughby's dismissal of this threat removed any leverage for the President or Joint Chiefs of Staff to counter MacArthur's plans. Roger Tubby, Assistant Press Secretary for the Truman White House, recalled Washington's reaction to the Chinese counteroffensive. "Surprise. Yes, I think surprise, although there had been reports that the Chinese were massing."³⁶ The State Department's most forward post, the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, contributed to the confusion over Chinese intentions as late as November 20, only four days prior to MacArthur's planned offensive. The CIA's Korean Summary published that day provided the Ambassador's assessment: "The Embassy feels

that unless the Chinese Communists intervene much more actively than they have during the past two weeks, it may be concluded that the Chinese are fighting a delaying action and are not committed to all-out intervention.”³⁷

Distrust between the State Department and the Far East Command is best illustrated in Nitze’s opinion on why MacArthur continued to push to the Yalu in spite of the Chinese threat: “Part of the reason he took these excessive risks was to create a situation in which we would be involved in a war with the Chinese Communists.”³⁸ Whether or not the Chinese intervention validated this fear, the friction between MacArthur’s command and strategic decision makers in Washington significantly degraded the ability of any of these organizations to independently assess Chinese capability and intent to decisively enter the Korean War.

Operation Chromite, MacArthur’s grand envelopment of the North Korean Army via the amphibious landings of the X Corps at Inchon on September 15, 1950, demonstrated remarkable tensions within the FEC staff as well as between MacArthur and the Joint Chiefs. MacArthur never wavered in his desire to attack at Inchon from the earliest days of the war, yet key members of his staff, as well as the Joint Chiefs, provided significant resistance to his plan. The JCS recommended that the target of the assault shift to Kunsan, 100 miles south of MacArthur’s goal of Inchon. This course of action would have significantly reduced the risk to the amphibious force by limiting the distance between the beachhead and Walker’s Eighth Army. MacArthur derided the Kunsan option for not striking deep enough into the enemy’s rear. A shallow envelopment, he believed, would prolong the conflict and lead to a difficult winter campaign.³⁹

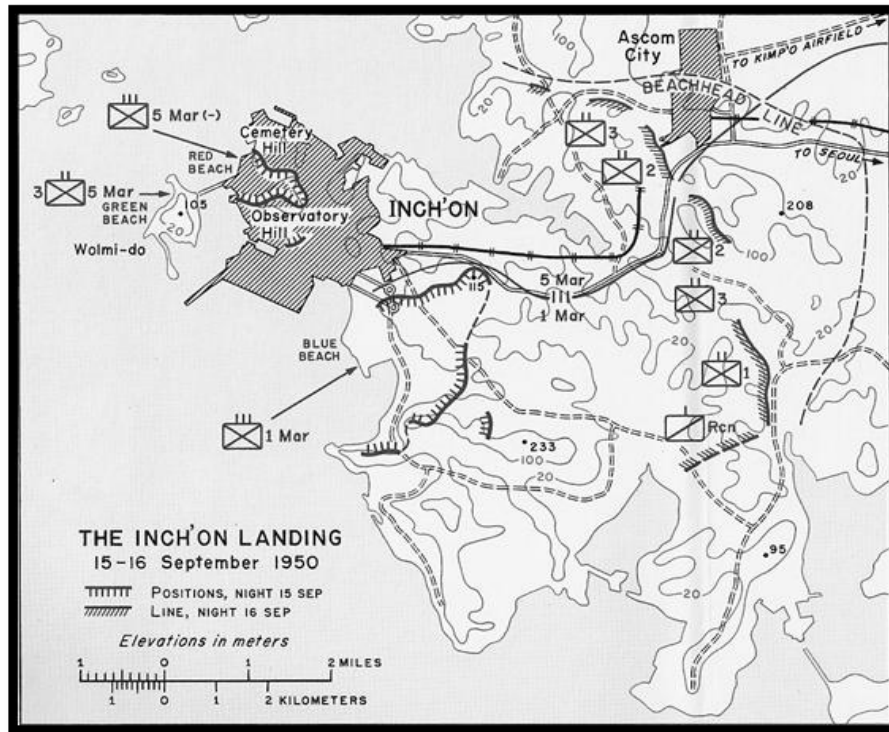


Figure 9. Operation Chromite

Source: James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972).

One of the few members of MacArthur's Chromite planning staff to openly dispute the wisdom of the operation, Admiral James Doyle, the lead naval planner, harbored significant reservations throughout the plan's development. While supporting MacArthur's objective to conduct an amphibious assault as a form of operational maneuver, he opposed landing at Inchon. In the final concept briefing to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on August 23, Doyle expressed his concerns about the amphibious operation's chances of success by stating "General, I have not been asked, nor have I volunteered my opinion of this landing. If I were asked, however, the best I can say that Inchon is not

impossible.”⁴⁰ Only after MacArthur masterfully persuaded the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest Sherman, that the Inchon operation was a bold challenge that the U.S. Navy was more than capable of rising did he win the grudging support of the Joint Chiefs for Operation Chromite. Doyle’s acknowledgement that his opinion as the primary naval planner for the operation had not been asked for demonstrates that MacArthur expected his staff to do his bidding as opposed to offering alternative solutions.

Even though Chromite was operationally successful in that the North Korean People’s Army in South Korea fled in disarray, MacArthur and key members of his inner circle punished those officers who cast doubt on the invasion’s success. This retribution isolated those who may have questioned future operations, preventing alternative analysis that may have averted MacArthur’s disastrous decision to press the offensive to the Yalu two months later. Chromite planning demonstrated Charles Willoughby’s significant influence within MacArthur’s staff, well beyond that normally found in a supporting staff officer. Willoughby energetically pushed MacArthur’s agenda, even in non-intelligence matters. During initial planning for Operation Chromite, Willoughby chastised Major General Hobart Gay, commanding the U.S. 1st Cavalry Division, for not reacting quickly enough in the planning effort.⁴¹ Schnabel writes, “He [Willoughby], admonished Gay to step lively or be left behind,” warning, “because if your landing is delayed, all that the 1st Cavalry Division will hit when it lands will be the tail end of the 24th Division as it passes north through Seoul.”⁴² Not only was this exchange highly unusual in the fact that a member of the General Staff was prodding a division commander, it also demonstrated Willoughby’s views that U.S. forces would face minimal resistance. X Corps, the Inchon

landing force, in fact, faced vicious street by street fighting in Seoul following the landings, and the Eighth Army struggled to break out of its encirclement for nearly a week before it could launch its counteroffensive.

The success of Operation Chromite and the Eighth Army's breakout from the Pusan Perimeter dramatically reversed the nature of the Korean War in MacArthur's favor, yet this fortune had far more ominous effects, as MacArthur's inner circle squelched those officers who questioned the general's grand strategy. In overcoming resistance to his Inchon plan from the Joint Chiefs in Washington, as well as from members of his own staff, MacArthur and his inner circle increasingly ignored opinions contrary to their own. John Higgins wrote in 1960, "The intoxication ensuing from too facile and spectacular a success would demand its price."⁴³ This price was paid in the mountains of North Korea in November, as Willoughby and MacArthur ignored Mao's looming counteroffensive.

In addition to increasing MacArthur's confidence in his strategy, the success of Inchon reduced the leverage that leaders in Washington could exercise over their commander in the field. Secretary of the Army Pace describes the effect of MacArthur's success on his confidence in him:

I do recall that the Joint Chiefs of Staff, uniformly, thought it [Inchon] was a bad idea, and I think they advised General MacArthur of that feeling. I think that all I can say is that after it was achieved, it made a very deep impression on me as to General MacArthur's capability as a commanding general.⁴⁴

Karl R. Bendetsen, Assistant Secretary of the Army, significantly differed from Pace's view of MacArthur. Bendetsen was shocked at how MacArthur promised to redeploy troops by Christmas in the face of "the very adverse intelligence reports of advance preparations for a massive Chinese intervention." In Bendetsen's opinion,

MacArthur considered himself “invincible” in the wake of the successful Chromite landings.⁴⁵

While the Secretary of the Army’s opinion of MacArthur dramatically increased after Inchon, the Joint Chiefs remained wary, but did not exercise their authority to rein in MacArthur. Observing from his point of view as an Asian expert in the State Department, John Melby stated: “My own suspicion in the matter is that MacArthur somehow had the kind of mystique with the Joint Chiefs, that anything he wanted to do, nobody dared say nay.” Melby further describes the impact of the successful Inchon landings on the Joint Chiefs: “it was a spectacular fluke [Inchon], and it worked. There was no stopping MacArthur after that.”⁴⁶ Chromite’s success effectively silenced those who might have otherwise provided alternate assessments of Chinese courses of action as UN Forces crossed the 38th Parallel.

While MacArthur insulated himself from outside criticism with his resounding success at Inchon, the decision to cross the 38th Parallel into North Korea increased consternation in Washington as to the ramifications of the UN Command’s advance. This concern stemmed from the UN Security Council’s original mandate for the use of force in Korea, which authorized UN forces to “assist the Republic of Korea in defending itself against armed attack.”⁴⁷ The Truman administration liberally interpreted this mandate as authorization to pursue the North Koreans across the original inter-Korean boundary. Despite this legal opinion, Truman and his closest advisors were concerned about whether or not the UN Command’s attack into North Korea would prompt the Russians or Chinese Communists to enter the conflict.⁴⁸

The Truman administration developed two potential courses of action should crossing the 38th Parallel draw a significant Soviet or Chinese response. In the event that the Chinese Communists committed troops, Truman's advisors recommended that the UN forces continue to fight while the U.S. used the UN Security Council to declare China as an aggressor. In the event that the Soviets occupied North Korea, Truman's advisors recommended that "General MacArthur should go on the defensive, make no move that would aggravate the situation, and report to Washington."⁴⁹ When questioned on whether or Chinese intervention was discussed during deliberations on whether to cross the 38th parallel, Secretary of the Army Pace did not recall this potential action. He dismissed Chinese threats to cross the Yalu:

Quite frankly, I guess that it's a case of crying wolf that often. I do not believe at that time anybody seriously believed that the Red Chinese were going to enter the war. Certainly, General MacArthur had very clear ideas that they would not, and I have to say that after Inchon I was very impressed with General MacArthur's capability to assess problems out there on the ground.⁵⁰

This statement shows the importance that MacArthur's (and therefore Willoughby's) assessments of Chinese intent had upon the Secretary of the Army. This situation clearly indicates that even at the strategic level, U.S. policy planners dismissed the veracity of the PLA threat, yet feared any contact with Soviet forces, regardless of scale.

The Assistant Secretary of the Army, Karl Bendetsen, disagreed with the decision to go north. He summarized the justification for those advocating crossing the 38th Parallel as "We had the momentum; that MacArthur was confident we could secure the unification of North-South Korea and remove a point of friction in the Far East; that we ought to unite Korea while the sun was still shining upon us."⁵¹ This shows

Washington's reliance upon MacArthur and his staff for ground truth judgments on the war on the Korean Peninsula.

The Joint Chiefs provided conflicting guidance on what MacArthur should do if he found evidence of Chinese involvement in the north. In a September 27 directive, the Joint Chiefs ordered MacArthur to halt any activities which could aggravate the situation, while on October 9, the JCS gave much more permissive guidance. This order stated, "in the event of the open or covert employment anywhere in Korea of major Chinese Communist units, without prior announcement, you should continue the action as long as, in your judgment, action by forces now under your control offers a reasonable chance of success."⁵² This message provided MacArthur with considerable leeway in defining what major Chinese Communist units consisted of and what he thought was a reasonable chance of success. The Joint Chiefs' blank check demonstrated that even in Washington, the JCS had succumbed to the virulent optimism felt in the Far East Command headquarters after the success of Operation Chromite.

The Joint Chiefs' vacillation provided MacArthur the ability to move forces into North Korea if an opportunity to destroy the North Korean Army or similar event of significant advantage appeared. Even in this regard, the Joint Chiefs mandated that MacArthur should only employ South Korean forces in the border regions between Korea and Manchuria. In contrast to this order, these same advisors deemed that, "if either Russian or Chinese forces had already entered Korea or had announced that they intended to enter, no matter how well the tactical situation might otherwise favor crossing the parallel at the time, General MacArthur should refrain from moving above that line."⁵³ The Joint Chiefs and MacArthur favored crossing the 38th Parallel in order to destroy the

NKPA. They found agreement in that the North Koreans could fully recover if not completely destroyed and might present a threat to the south in the future.

During the debate over whether or not to cross into North Korea, indications that Mao was preparing for war were readily evident. James Schnabel noted: “MacArthur continued to favor crossing the parallel even after his G2, General Willoughby, reported on August 31, that sources have reported troop movements from Central China to Manchuria for sometime, which suggests movements preliminary to entering the Korean theater.”⁵⁴ At this time, Willoughby estimated that approximately 246,000 Chinese soldiers were massing in Manchuria, to include 80,000 in Antung, on the north bank of the Yalu River.⁵⁵

The Joint Chiefs authorized MacArthur to conduct operations north of the 38th Parallel on September 27, 1950, just twelve days after the Inchon landings. In this directive, the JCS gave specific instructions to be wary of Soviet or Chinese intervention. The Joint Chiefs directed MacArthur to “make special efforts to determine whether there is a Chinese Communist or Soviet threat to the attainment of your objective, which will be reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a matter of urgency.”⁵⁶ The directive further specified that if the UN Command encountered Soviet or Chinese forces north of the parallel or those states should announce their intentions to enter Korea, MacArthur would immediately inform his superiors in Washington. Mao’s public warnings in mid-October of Chinese intentions to enter Korea should have triggered the restriction highlighted in the Joint Chiefs’ orders to MacArthur. Willoughby’s dismissal of these warnings in his intelligence assessments provided MacArthur the justification to continue with his planned conquest of North Korea by the end of 1950.

The Wake Island Conference between General MacArthur and President Truman offers a unique opportunity to observe how he, the Joint Chiefs and the President developed a common vision that considered the Korean War to be in its terminal stages. This perception increased pressure on MacArthur to bring the war to a rapid conclusion in order to allow U.S. forces to redeploy to Europe. The Joint Chiefs sought to immediately build combat capability in Europe to deter the perceived Soviet primary threat to U.S. interests. The Wake Island conference also highlighted concerns in Washington over the obvious PLA build up in Manchuria, and Willoughby's denial of the threat that these forces posed to MacArthur's command.



Figure 10. Key Leaders at Wake Island

Source: James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 211.

The purpose of the Wake Conference was to develop a common vision of United States strategy in Korea as well as to discuss the potential for Chinese Communist entry into the War and to define the military end state.⁵⁷ Accompanying President Truman to the meeting were his most senior foreign policy and military advisors. Vernice Anderson⁵⁸ recalled that personnel traveling with the President saw the meeting as an extraordinary event. Traveling with Truman was General of the Army Omar Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; Ambassador Averell Harriman, Special Assistant to the President; Secretary of the Army Pace; and Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.⁵⁹

Willoughby accompanied MacArthur to Wake Island and participated in briefing Truman on the situation in Korea.⁶⁰ During this briefing, he and MacArthur told the President and his senior advisors of their assessment that the Chinese would not enter the Korean War. Secretary of the Army Pace specifically asked MacArthur if he was getting enough support from Washington. The general replied: “No commander in the history of war has ever had more complete and adequate support from all agencies in Washington than I have.”⁶¹ Taking into account the Far East Command’s exclusion of outsiders and Willoughby’s tight control over intelligence operations, any additional analysis from Washington would have been unwelcome in MacArthur’s headquarters.

A common assumption that the Korean War was nearly over dominated the discussions between MacArthur and the senior officials from Washington. MacArthur expressed his ultimate intent to the President and General Bradley: “It is my hope to be able to withdraw the Eighth Army to Japan by Christmas.”⁶² This mindset permeated discussions during the conference, which also focused on a pending peace treaty between

the U.S. and Japan and the ramifications of U.S. troops re-deploying to Japan after the fighting in Korea was over. MacArthur warned Truman that a long term U.S. occupation of Korea would result in failure. He advocated rebuilding a Korean Army and supporting air and naval services in order to prevent Communist infringement. In this recommendation, he acknowledged the Chinese threat: "If we do that, it will not only secure Korea but it will be a tremendous deterrent to the Chinese Communists moving south. This is a threat that cannot be laughed off."⁶³ In this statement, MacArthur acknowledged the potential for Chinese intervention in Korea and the implications of its severity.

The Joint Chiefs Chairman, General Bradley, pushed to move experienced troops from Korea to Europe as soon as possible. Citing the difficulty in getting forces to Europe before spring, 1951, he requested, "Could the Second or Third Division be made available to be sent over to Europe by January?" MacArthur agreed, selecting the Second Infantry Division.⁶⁴ Word of this decision rapidly spread throughout the UN Command at the conclusion of the conference.

President Truman and his advisors were keen to hear MacArthur's interpretation of the Chinese Communist troop buildup in Manchuria and the Chinese warnings. When Truman asked MacArthur about the chances of Chinese intervention, the general responded:

Very little. Had they interfered in the first or second months it would have been decisive. We are no longer fearful of their intervention. We no longer stand hat in hand. The Chinese have 300,000 men in Manchuria. Of these probably not more than 100-125,000 are distributed along the Yalu River. Only 50/60,000 could have gotten across the Yalu River. They have no Air Force. Now that we have bases for our Air Forces in Korea, if the Chinese tried to get down to Pyongyang there would be the greatest slaughter.⁶⁵

This claim directly reflects Willoughby's assessments of the Chinese threat to the UN Command, highlighting that MacArthur based much of his judgment on the analysis provided by his senior intelligence officer. This assessment also reveals Willoughby's and MacArthur's mirror imaging problem by assessing potential Chinese moves in comparison with the strength of UN airpower, enabling their dismissal of the threat posed by the "300,000 men in Manchuria."

President Truman was not the only official on Wake Island concerned about the Chinese; Assistant Secretary of State Dean Rusk specifically questioned MacArthur on the possibility that the Chinese could declare war on the United States. Rusk based his concerns on China's earlier warnings that it would enter the war if UN forces crossed the 38th Parallel. Rusk recalled MacArthur's response: "He said he did not fully understand why they had gone out on such a limb and that they must be greatly embarrassed by the predicament in which they now find themselves."⁶⁶ Only one day earlier, Willoughby's assessment in the Daily Intelligence Summary described Zhou En-Lai's threatening statements as "blackmail." Dean Rusk also brought to the discussions the possibility of an international force to patrol the Chinese-Korean border. MacArthur acknowledged the difficulty of the terrain and political complexities of the border region between Manchuria and North Korea: "It would be indefensible from a military point of view. I am going to put South Korean troops up there. They will be the buffer . . . I want to take all non-Korean troops out of Korea as soon as possible."⁶⁷ MacArthur later ignored this idea in his planned November offensive by placing U.S. forces in the lead in his final drive to the Yalu.

The United States Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, John Muccio, accompanied MacArthur on his flight to the Wake Island conference, adding an additional perspective to the significance of the meeting. Muccio recalled that MacArthur admitted that Chinese troops had already crossed into North Korea, but minimized their significance. MacArthur further added, “My intelligence has established that there are some twenty-five to thirty thousand Chinese in that area [in the path of the Eighth Army’s advance north of Pyongyang], but not more than that could have crossed the Yalu or my intelligence would know about it.”⁶⁸ MacArthur’s confidence in his intelligence directorate overlooked the fact that in the same statement acknowledging that the Chinese were already in North Korea, Willoughby had failed to provide an answer as to why the Chinese were there and what their intentions were. At this point in the campaign, Willoughby’s analysis changed from warning of the implications of the Chinese build-up in Manchuria to dismissing this information in order to not disrupt MacArthur’s plans to drive to the Yalu or alarm officials in Washington.

In his 1954 book, *MacArthur 1941-1951*, Willoughby refuted criticism of MacArthur’s dismissal of the Chinese at Wake Island. He drew a distinction between identifying that the Chinese were capable of deploying hundreds of thousands of troops in Korea and the inability to predict Mao’s intentions:

We have here an accepted distinction in intelligence parlance between “capabilities,” i.e., physical ability to march into Korea in overwhelming numbers and enemy intentions, i.e., was Peiping really prepared to march and thus risk open war with half the western world?⁶⁹

In this statement, Willoughby shirked his responsibility to provide his commander with a prediction of potential enemy courses of action. Willoughby’s responses to overt

warnings about Chinese intentions to intervene as “blackmail” served to refute this responsibility.

General conclusions from the FEC HQ to Washington were that the Chinese would not intervene in Korea for several reasons. These reasons reflect mirror imaging and the circular nature of the reporting between the FEC and Washington. The primary justifications for refuting indicators that the Chinese might commit troops to Korea were that Mao feared that any conflict with the U.S. would threaten the success of the revolution, decrease the possibility of China’s introduction to the United Nations, and that the Communists would suffer heavy casualties without significant air and naval support from the Soviets.⁷⁰

The Wake Island Conference concluded with all parties believing that the war in Korea was nearly over. MacArthur continued planning the final drive to the Yalu, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff eagerly anticipated the redeployment of forces from the peninsula to areas of greater strategic concern. Shortly after the meeting concluded, the optimism expressed by MacArthur at Wake Island turned into tangible events that would have significant impact upon the looming battles in November.

Only five days after the Wake Island Conference, MacArthur’s headquarters issued post-conflict plans in the form of “Operations Plan 202,” which detailed how UN forces under Far East Command would occupy North Korea. MacArthur designated X Corps as an occupation force with one U.S. Army division, South Korean forces and a U.S. advisory group. The remaining U.S. and UN forces would leave the peninsula as soon as possible in order to rapidly return forces to the European theater.⁷¹ This concept supported Bradley’s request to MacArthur at Wake Island. One day later, the Joint

Chiefs notified the FEC that the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Divisions would be withdrawn from the Pacific Theater immediately after hostilities on the Korean Peninsula ended, due to requirements elsewhere.⁷²

On the peninsula, the Wake Island Conference had significant tactical implications, as commanders throughout the UN Command shared their superior's vision that the war was nearly over. On October 22, Walker's Eighth Army requested that six ships carrying artillery ammunition to Korea return to the United States because the ammunition would not be needed.⁷³ Logistics preparations supported widespread sentiment that the war was in its final stages. James Schnabel wrote: "Ammunition already in Korea, Walker believed, could take care of the North Koreans and still leave a balance for post hostilities requirements."⁷⁴ MacArthur's headquarters diverted the ammunition ships to Hawaii in accordance with this request. Only three days later, Major General Lawrence (Dutch) Keiser, Commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, informed his officers that the division had received orders to deploy home before Christmas. This word spread like wildfire amongst the grizzled Soldiers in the division, weary from weeks of brutal fighting.⁷⁵

Other nations shared the U.S. sentiment that the Korean War was in its terminal phase. The United Kingdom considered withholding a portion of the 29th Infantry Brigade, which had deployed to Korea on October 4th, as well as withdrawing the 8th Hussars, an armored regiment. The redeployment of the 8th Hussars was motivated because "the future battles in Korea in which heavy armor will be required seems remote."⁷⁶ Only intervention by U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Lawton Collins, convinced the British to send the remaining elements of the 29th Infantry Brigade to

Korea and retain the brigade's armor due to a shortage of tanks within MacArthur's formations.⁷⁷

Willoughby's assessment that the Chinese Communists would not enter the Korean War made an important impression upon the Wake Island Conference participants and created second order effects that dramatically reduced the ability of the UN forces fighting in Korea to defeat the coming Chinese Communist counteroffensive. In convincing MacArthur that the optimal time for Chinese intervention had passed, Willoughby enabled the FEC Commander to make his "home by Christmas" pledge, reassuring the President and his advisors that the war was nearly over. This in turn hastened the Joint Chiefs' requests to withdraw major combat forces from the Korean Peninsula, ultimately gutting discipline within organizations such as the 2nd Infantry Division, whose troopers now saw a light at the end of the tunnel they had been fighting in. Finally, the decision to divert thousands of tons of ammunition from arriving in theater would exact a heavy price in the coming month, as the Chinese Communist Forces overwhelmed the exhausted UN forces advancing into the frozen mountains of North Korea.

The primary institutional factors that led to Willoughby's faulty analysis that the Chinese Communists would not enter the Korean War were his centralized control over intelligence operations, the exclusive command climate within the Far East Command Headquarters, and institutional haste to end the war, which magnified these faults. Willoughby deliberately thwarted the Central Intelligence Agency's efforts in the Korean theater, thereby ensuring that only MacArthur's voice would be heard in Washington. This environment resulted in circular analysis as the CIA's reports directly reflected

Willoughby's reporting due to that agency's dearth of independent sources of information in Korea. These faults in turn reinforced Willoughby's and MacArthur's assessments during the Wake Island Conference, in which all parties involved developed a sense that the war was all but over. In addition to this, MacArthur's resounding success with the controversial Inchon landings enabled Willoughby and other members of MacArthur's inner circle to squelch any dissenting voices within the Far East Command. With no external intelligence analysis available to provide competing theories on China's potential to intervene in Korea, and the FEC staff providing unquestioning support, MacArthur was free to execute his final offensive to the Yalu.

¹R.S. Bratton, "Office Memorandum No. 41," *War Organization* (Tokyo: GHQ, FEC Military Intelligence Division, July 25, 1950), 1.

²Bratton, "Office Memorandum No. 41," 1.

³Far East Command Military Intelligence Section, "Operations of the Military Intelligence Section, GHQ, SWPA/FEC/SCAP," *Supplement: Korea, 1950-1951* (General Headquarters, Far East Command, April 1951).

⁴Charles A. Willoughby, "Office Memorandum No. 44," *Organization of the Daily Summary; Reorganization of C/P and Executive Group* (Tokyo: GHQ, FEC Military Intelligence Section, September 1, 1950).

⁵Lawton Collins, "Memorandum From the Chief of Staff of the Army," *United States Department of State*, July 28, 1950, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/96785.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2009).

⁶Willoughby, "Office Memorandum No. 44."

⁷Bratton, *War Organization*, 2.

⁸Bratton, *War Organization*, 1.

⁹Willoughby, "Office Memorandum No. 44."

¹⁰H.A. DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise in The Korean War* (Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation, 1962), 22.

¹¹James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 199

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise*, 22.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise*, 30.

¹⁷Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 230.

¹⁸Department of the Army, G2. "Joint Daily SITREP No. 127" (Washington, DC, November 3, 1950).

¹⁹DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise*, 31.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 31.

²¹*Ibid.*, 32.

²²Richard D. McKinzie. *Oral History Interview with Paul H. Nitze* (June 17, 1975).

²³Charles A. Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 402-403.

²⁴Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 148-149.

²⁵David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 53.

²⁶Trumbull Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 78.

²⁷Ludwell L. Montague, *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1992), 55.

²⁸Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 53.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 53.

³⁰Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 388.

³¹Robert P. Joyce, "Memorandum from Robert P. Joyce of Policy Planning Staff to the Ambassador at Large (Jessup)," *United States Department of State*, January 16, 1951, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/96785.pdf> (accessed April 19, 2009)

³²William Manchester, *American Caesar* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1978), 581.

³³Richard D. McKinzie, *Oral History Interview with U. Alexis Johnson* (June 19, 1975).

³⁴McKinzie, *Interview with U. Alexis Johnson*.

³⁵McKinzie, *Interview with Paul H. Nitze*, 3.

³⁶Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History Interview with Roger Tubby* (February 10, 1970).

³⁷Central Intelligence Agency, "Daily Korean Summary 20 November 1950," (Washington DC, November 20, 1950)

³⁸McKinzie, *Interview with Paul H. Nitze*.

³⁹Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 150.

⁴⁰Robert Leckie, *Conflict: History of the Korean War, 1950-53* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1962), 133.

⁴¹The 1st Cavalry Division was troop listed to participate in the Inchon landings in Operation Chromite's early planning stages. Due to the rapid North Korean successes in July and August, MacArthur sent the 1st Cavalry to reinforce the Eighth Army in its defense of the Pusan Perimeter. The 7th Infantry Division subsequently joined the First Marine Division as part of the CHROMITE assault force.

⁴²Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 140.

⁴³Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur*, 48.

⁴⁴Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History Interview with Frank Pace Jr.* (February 17, 1972).

⁴⁵Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History Interview with Karl R. Bendetsen* (November 21, 1972).

⁴⁶Robert Accinelli, *Oral History Interview with John F. Melby* (November 21, 1986).

⁴⁷Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 178.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 178.

- ⁴⁹Ibid., 178.
- ⁵⁰Hess, *Interview with Frank Pace Jr.*
- ⁵¹Hess, *Interview with Karl R. Bendetsen.*
- ⁵²Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 179.
- ⁵³Ibid., 179.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., 179.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., 179.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., 182.
- ⁵⁷Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History Interview with David C. Bell* (October 16, 1968).
- ⁵⁸Personal Assistant to the U.S. Ambassador at Large, Phillip C. Jessup.
- ⁵⁹Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History Interview with Vernice Anderson* (February 2, 1971).
- ⁶⁰Jerald L. Hill and William D. Stilley, *Oral History Interview with Dr. Wallace H. Graham* (January 10, 1976).
- ⁶¹General Omar N Bradley, "Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950," *Truman Library*, October 15, 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/Wi198_2.jpg (accessed November 11, 2008), 7.
- ⁶²Ibid., 2.
- ⁶³Ibid., 2.
- ⁶⁴Bradley, "Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950," 14.
- ⁶⁵On 18 October, 1950, USAF Reconnaissance flights identified over 100 Soviet built fighter jets at a Chinese air base within range of the Yalu River.
- Bradley, "Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950," 11.
- ⁶⁶Dean Rusk, "Wake Island Meeting." *Truman Library*, October 15, 1950. http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/Wi196_1.htm (accessed November 11, 2008), 2.
- ⁶⁷Bradley, "Substance of Statements Made at Wake Island Conference on 15 October 1950," 22.

⁶⁸Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History of Ambassador John J. Muccio, Ambassador to Korea, 1949-1952*, (February 18, 1971).

⁶⁹Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 387.

⁷⁰Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 201.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 222.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 223.

⁷³Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 16.

⁷⁴Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 229.

⁷⁵Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter*, 16.

⁷⁶Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 225.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 225.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONALITY AND POLITICS

MacArthur had to take steps to force the enemy to tip his hand: MacArthur's attack on November 24 was a reconnaissance in force but with freedom of action to advance or withdraw . . . The maneuver planned by MacArthur was the classical one made famous by von Moltke: action by separated forces off the enemy's axis of movement.¹

— Charles A. Willoughby,
praising MacArthur's failed November offensive in 1954

The most important person to influence intelligence assessments for the United States Far East Command and for senior military and civilian leaders in Washington was Charles Willoughby, MacArthur's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. While other individuals carried out vital roles as commanders and staff advisors, Willoughby filled one of the most important positions in the development and execution of MacArthur's strategy to rapidly end the war in Korea. MacArthur provided the operational vision for the United Nations campaign and Willoughby provided the supporting intelligence. His assessment of Chinese intentions during the Wake Island Conference on October 15 either convinced the President and his advisors that the PLA would not intervene in Korea, or was at least credible enough to undermine any opposition to MacArthur's strategy. MacArthur thought highly of Willoughby, describing him as "The finest G-2 officer he had encountered in his fifty-odd years of service."² This praise cemented his place within MacArthur's exclusive inner circle. Their individual personality characteristics magnified their flaws, resulting in the United Nations Command's defeat at the hands of the People's Liberation Army.

Willoughby was one of the United States military's most experienced intelligence officers; how did his upbringing, personal experiences and political views contribute to

his faulty assessment that the Chinese would not intervene decisively in North Korea in November 1950? According to historian David Halberstam, “He knew that the Chinese were gathering along the Yalu in huge numbers, and that their leadership had said they were going to enter the war . . . everything he picked up from his agents indicated that they [PLA] were going ahead with their plans to enter the war.”³ Despite these indicators, Willoughby assessed that the public Chinese threats to intervene were merely political rhetoric and minimized the actual number of Chinese troops MacArthur faced, even after elements of multiple PLA armies had been identified inside North Korea. Willoughby’s faulty intelligence leadership ensured that no competing analysis would interfere with MacArthur’s planned November offensive designed to end the Korean War by Christmas, 1950.

Willoughby’s upbringing, inter-war personal and professional development, and World War II experience inculcated in him a devout affinity and intense loyalty for strong, authoritarian leaders, virulent anti-communist views and preconceived judgments about the Chinese ability to wage war. These factors led to significant flaws in his analytical judgment and heavily influenced his performance as MacArthur’s senior intelligence officer. It is this extensive bias that likely led to his staunch support of MacArthur’s final offensive in November, 1950, making him culpable in that operation’s failure. Even in the tragic aftermath of the defeat of the UN offensive, Willoughby remained loyal to MacArthur and his plan, preferring to lay blame on the Truman administration and MacArthur’s perceived enemies in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Charles Willoughby’s upbringing and experiences as a young Army officer prior to the outbreak of the Second World War shaped his character and professional ethos.

His German lineage made him subject to rumors, innuendo and misperceptions. A prime example of one of these misperceptions occurred when Paul Nitze recalled incorrectly, “Willoughby had been a Colonel Witzleben and changed his name to Willoughby. He had fought on the *German* side during World War I.”⁴ Nitze also recalled how he felt about Willoughby: “He was a peculiar kind of Prussian, romantic, intelligence operator. He wasn’t uninteresting to talk to. My relations with him weren’t bad at all, but I just never had any confidence in his soundness.”⁵ Many other Willoughby acquaintances shared Nitze’s perceptions. Known as “Sir Charles” to other staff officers, Willoughby gave the impression that he looked down upon others in an aristocratic fashion.⁶

Willoughby’s unique background also confused Dr. Wallace Graham, Truman’s personal physician. Graham observed the President’s interaction with MacArthur and Willoughby at the Wake Island Conference. After Truman made an initial visit with the troops securing the meeting place, Graham recalled: “Then he talked with General MacArthur, his G-2, that is his intelligence officer, a man with a German name, changed his name to Willoughby--no, it was another name.”⁷ Confusion over his ancestry plagued Willoughby throughout his career, giving many people the impression that he deliberately cultivated a Prussian-like persona. Journalist Frank Kluckhorn wrote in 1952, “He has always favored natty custom-tailored uniforms, and has at times sported a monocle.” Even Willoughby’s former enemies observed his unique Germanic qualities. Kluckhorn cited “an exceptionally candid Japanese who once worked with him [Willoughby] in Tokyo described him as a stout, obdurate German-American officer like a bull. He has sharp brains and nerves which bring about once in a while a sudden burst of temper.”⁸ Kluckhorn concluded his assessment of Willoughby’s personality as “our own Junker

general.” Adding to this impression, Willoughby’s speech was heavily accented with his native German tongue as late as the mid-1920s.⁹ Whether or not Willoughby deliberately constructed this impression, or was simply the victim of other people’s prejudices, it is certain that his unique background significantly influenced his career.

Willoughby was born as Adolph C. Weidenbach in 1892 to a German father, Baron T. von Tscheppe-Weidenbach and an American mother, Emmy Willoughby.¹⁰ While this lineage is in accordance with the biography published in the Far East Command’s official history of the FEC Military Intelligence Section, as well as the biography posted by the University of Gettysburg, where Willoughby’s personal papers are archived, his true background remains in question. Kluckhorn wrote in his 1952 article that Willoughby may have been born out of wedlock as the illegitimate child of a German rope maker, August Weidenbach and Emma Langhauser. Willoughby confirmed to Kluckhorn that he had never known his father and was an orphan.¹¹ Due to this potentially embarrassing situation, Willoughby may have felt later in life that he was denied a rightful place in German nobility or created the official lineage to increase his status when he moved to the United States as a young man.¹²

Willoughby’s education prepared him well as a future intelligence officer. His college studies in Europe focused on language and literary arts, culminating in a degree in philology and modern languages to include French, Spanish and his native German before he moved to the U.S. in 1910.¹³ Upon his arrival in the United States, Willoughby immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving from 1910-1913, before attending Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1914. While at Gettysburg College, he established the school’s Reserve Officer Training Program

(ROTC), from which he was commissioned as a Major at the young age of twenty-two years.

Willoughby accepted an active commission in 1916, and served in the 16th Infantry Regiment, prior to deploying to France, one year later, with the 1st Division of the American Expeditionary Force. While in the combat zone, he successfully completed flight training as a pursuit pilot. In his short career as an Army aviator, Willoughby served as Major (Later General) Carl Spaatz's executive officer for the U.S. Army's Aviation training center. At some point either during the war or after his return to the United States, Charles Weidenbach changed his name to Willoughby, likely his mother's maiden name.¹⁴

The tumultuous inter-war years saw Willoughby serving in positions varying from tactical commands to diplomatic postings, to instructing at the Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Despite his education in foreign languages and service as an aviator during the First World War, Willoughby's initial post-war assignments were in infantry units to include demonstration machine gun teams at Fort Benning, Georgia, and company and battalion command of African-American units on the Mexican border.

The Army capitalized on Willoughby's extensive education and linguistic talents by moving him to the War Department's Military Intelligence Directorate in 1923. Between 1923 and 1928 he served as a military attaché in Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, earning high honors from those nations. During this tenure, Willoughby had firsthand exposure to Venezuela's storied dictator, Juan Vicente Gomez, and other regional despots. While serving as an attaché in Ecuador, Italy's fascist government

awarded Willoughby the decoration of the Order of Saints Maurizio and Lazzaro, likely making a lasting impression.¹⁵

Post attaché assignments brought Willoughby to Fort Leavenworth as an instructor, during which time he published several books and articles prior to his selection for the Army War College in 1936. Kluckhorn found that Willoughby was remembered at the Command and General Staff College as “One of the most gifted thespians ever to play romantic leads in the dramatic club.”¹⁶ This sense of drama would suit Willoughby well as he worked his way into his future position as one of MacArthur’s trusted advisors. In 1939, Willoughby moved to the Philippines where he initially served as MacArthur’s Logistics Officer prior to becoming the G2 for U.S. Army Forces, Far East, where he served for the next decade.

Willoughby’s service in World War II had an inauspicious start, as the then colonel worked feverishly to support the Philippine defenses. Willoughby personally distinguished himself in battle by assuming command of a Philippine Constabulary Company whose commander was critically wounded. According to the citation for the Silver Star awarded to Willoughby after the battle, he rallied the unit under heavy machine gun and mortar fire, leading a successful counterattack against the Japanese.¹⁷ Later, Willoughby had the good fortune to be one of the few officers to escape the Philippines with MacArthur, ultimately landing him in Australia.

Willoughby’s primary focus as MacArthur’s G2 during World War II was to develop an effective intelligence organization that could withstand the tyranny of distance posed by the South West Pacific Theater as well as the myriad of difficulties

presented by joint and coalition warfare. Willoughby's experience in dealing with these complexities convinced him on the necessity for centralizing intelligence operations.¹⁸

Willoughby openly espoused his philosophy on centralized control over intelligence activities. The paper "A Brief History of the G-2 Section, GHQ, South West Pacific," authorized and approved by Willoughby in 1948, explicitly stated in the preface that, "G2 fought consistently for centralization of intelligence though operational control of all related intelligence agencies or affiliates."¹⁹ This statement confirms Willoughby's entrenched opposition to external intelligence apparatus from operating within his theater. In 1949, Willoughby proudly told *New York Times* reporter Frank Kluckhohn that he successfully kept the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency, out of the Pacific Theater during the Pacific campaign.²⁰ This exclusion reinforced Willoughby's ability to centrally manage all intelligence operations within MacArthur's sphere of influence. This mentality resulted in poor communication and coordination between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the FEC G2 Section in 1950.

Close associates of Willoughby acknowledged that despite his high level of intelligence, he was difficult to work with. Major General Ned Almond, MacArthur's Chief of Staff during the occupation of Japan and first two months of the Korean War, respected the G2's experience, yet noted important personality characteristics: "He is excitable sometimes and inclined to brush off other people's opinions which disagree with his own. For that reason, many people don't particularly care for his method."²¹ As MacArthur's Chief of Staff and renowned MacArthur advocate, Almond noted that the Far East Command's senior intelligence officer was not receptive to alternative analysis

or ideas. This explains Willoughby's personal involvement in producing the Daily Intelligence Summary as opposed to seeking out opinions from other analysts and comparing their estimates. Almond concluded his comments on Willoughby by describing that although the two officers had served together earlier in their careers, once they were on MacArthur's staff, Willoughby rarely discussed his opinions with him.²² The lack of communication between these critical staff officers highlights dysfunction within MacArthur's headquarters.

Willoughby consistently displayed right wing political views throughout his career, which significantly influenced his analytical perspective. Immediately after MacArthur's headquarters moved to Tokyo, in 1945, Willoughby befriended the former Italian Ambassador to Japan, Benito Mussolini's fascist representative to his Axis partners.²³ This was not the first time that Willoughby had shown an affinity for the dictator. During Willoughby's assignment as an instructor at the Infantry school in 1936, he spoke highly of Mussolini. John Simkin cites Willoughby's words of praise for the despot:

Historical judgment, freed from the emotional haze of the moment, will credit Mussolini with wiping out a memory of defeat by re-establishing the traditional military supremacy of the white race.²⁴

Willoughby also highly respected the Spanish dictator Generalissimo Francisco Franco. In a chapter on the Spanish Civil War in his book, *Maneuver in War*, Willoughby praised Franco: "From the viewpoint of high command, a certain quality of General Franco's is easily recognizable, that stamps him as a great commander; his elastic strategic dispositions, in shifting rapidly from one theater of operations to another, i.e. The essence of maneuver . . ." he continued to compare the Spanish leader with the

greatest generals of the First World War.²⁵ In his admiration of Franco's use of maneuver, Willoughby set the stage for his future devotion to Douglas MacArthur, who extensively used daring operational maneuvers to avoid Japanese strengths in the Pacific campaign as well as in the amphibious landings at Inchon.

Posted to Manila prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Willoughby formed close friendships with members of the Spanish elite who were staunch supporters of Franco's right wing Falangist party.²⁶ Willoughby's respect for Franco continued to grow to the point that he considered Franco to be the world's second greatest commander, only surpassed by MacArthur himself. In a post-retirement trip to visit Franco in 1952, Willoughby bragged that he had fully endorsed the Spanish leader in his lectures during his tenure as an instructor at the Army's Command and General Staff College.²⁷

Willoughby, born into the fringes of the aristocracy at the height of the German state, developed an elitist mentality through his experiences as a teenager in his native land prior to moving to America. This experience likely formed the foundation of his conservative political beliefs that would eventually evolve into an anti-communist fervor which he nurtured throughout his military career and into his retirement.²⁸ His experience with authoritarian regimes in the 1920s most likely impressed upon him the effectiveness of strong central leaders. While these experiences and mentality would perfectly suit him as a member of MacArthur's inner circle, they sowed the seeds of failure in Willoughby's leadership as an intelligence officer.

Willoughby was intensely loyal to MacArthur throughout ten years of service on his staff. Willoughby shared MacArthur's opinion that the general lacked support from

Washington as far back as the onset of World War II. Throughout the American occupation of Japan a constant theme permeated the staff that saw officers who had fought in the European theater during World War II as threats, while MacArthur's inner circle was stacked with those who had served in the Pacific.²⁹ This attitude most likely stemmed from MacArthur's resentment that the fight against Germany was the strategic main effort, drawing vast amounts of resources that he wanted to employ in his fight against Japan. William Manchester identified this hostility extended even in regards to Allied successes in the European theater. He cited Willoughby's reaction to news that U.S. troops had seized the bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen: "We don't give a goddam out here for anything that happens in Europe."³⁰ This attitude permeated MacArthur's headquarters and likely laid the foundation for friction between MacArthur and the Joint Chiefs during the fall of 1950.³¹

Willoughby derided the agreement between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill that solidified the "Germany First" policy. Claiming that MacArthur was never informed of this agreement, Willoughby lashed out in his book, *MacArthur*, "He (MacArthur) could never understand the defeatist Far Eastern military strategy pursued in those early days of 1942 by the high command, both military and diplomatic, in Washington."³² This resentment manifested itself throughout Willoughby's writings after President Truman relieved MacArthur in April, 1951.

One of Willoughby's most important projects between the end of hostilities with Japan and the start of the Korean War was to publish a definitive work on MacArthur's campaigns throughout the Pacific. This project, started in 1946, took on grandiose proportions as Willoughby formed an immense staff that operated in secret in Tokyo for

research and editing. MacArthur's chief aide, Colonel Laurence Bunker, recalled that Willoughby's book on MacArthur originally started as a history of the Far East Command G2 section, but changed to a biography of the FEC Commander after discussions with the eventual publisher, McGraw-Hill.³³ This change was most likely due to the publisher's desire to use the MacArthur name as a marketing tool.

Ultimately, this book was to have become the official history of the Army's involvement in the Pacific theater, but Willoughby abruptly abandoned it in 1949, when the Pentagon's Department of Military History demanded to be part of the final editing process. Unwilling to allow outside influence in the final production stages, Willoughby and MacArthur never published the three volume report.³⁴ This document most likely formed the basis for Willoughby's post-retirement book, *MacArthur 1941-1951*, in which he lionized his benefactor. An example of Willoughby's awe for MacArthur is in his description of the general's courage in personally conducting an aerial reconnaissance of the Yalu River region in an unarmed plane in late October, 1950. Willoughby shows his glorified view of the FEC Commander by describing the harrowing mission through enemy airspace as: "The air has never seen a more daring flight."³⁵

The United States Ambassador to Korea, John J. Muccio, recalled that Willoughby had extensive influence over the MacArthur's perception of the Korean battlefield. Muccio saw that Willoughby "closed in" MacArthur, preventing him from getting information that he needed to make good decisions. As a result of this influence, by November 1950, MacArthur was, "no longer in touch with the situation."³⁶ Muccio's commentary reinforces the importance of Willoughby's assessments on MacArthur's decision making.

Muccio saw Willoughby's book project as a major distraction from his primary duty as an intelligence officer. When asked on his observations of Willoughby's performance, he stated that the MacArthur biography was "dearer to his heart than keeping in touch with what was going on in Korea."³⁷ Aside from Willoughby's passion for drama and desire to further the MacArthur legend, Willoughby stood to earn a substantial amount of money from the book's sales.

In his retirement, Willoughby called into question the Truman administration's decision to deny the FEC commander the authority to bomb the bridges spanning the Yalu River upon his first request. Despite Willoughby's admonishment of Truman for preventing MacArthur from interdicting the PLA infiltration with air power, MacArthur asked permission to bomb the Yalu River bridges nearly three weeks *after* the Chinese moved the majority of their forces into Korea. Multiple interrogation reports from PLA prisoners captured between October 25 and November 2, along with evidence gathered by Goncharov, Lewis and Xue in their book, *Uncertain Partners*, support this conclusion.

Willoughby's post-war book tells a story in which MacArthur's concern about Chinese intervention grew greater each day after the initial encounters with Chinese forces in late October 1950. He blames America's political leaders for their lack of foresight which doomed MacArthur's final offensive, stating that officials "Either in Washington or the UN could have stopped our troops at any point in North Korea if they had taken the mounting Chinese threat seriously. Instead, each preferred the opiate of wishful thinking, the myopic resignation of the ostrich."³⁸ In this vehement defense of MacArthur, Willoughby fails to identify that leaders in both Washington and the UN

were dependent upon the FEC G2 for intelligence and MacArthur's experience in order to make their decisions.

Willoughby's right wing political views and favorable opinion of fascist leaders formed the basis for his vehement anti-communist sentiment. Willoughby harbored extensive prejudice against anyone even remotely associated with communism. It was this extensive bias that likely led to his staunch support of MacArthur's final offensive in November 1950, fearing that anything less than total victory against the communists in Korea would embolden further communist aggression.

Willoughby's staunch anti-communist views come to the forefront multiple times throughout his career. His book, *Maneuver in War*, published in 1939, when he was a lieutenant colonel, contains several chapters that highlight his bias against any form of Communism. In the introduction for his chapter on the Sino-Japanese War, Willoughby described a "Conflict of Empire," in which Japan is perilously exposed to communist expansion in the form of Soviet influence and China. He offered: "Japan assumes the role of champion of the capitalistic and monetary economy. A sentimental world may eventually have to choose between the rising sun and the red sickle."³⁹ Two years after Willoughby published this work, he was fighting the Japanese in the Philippines.

After the fall of Japan in 1945, Willoughby pursued communist involvement in that country during the war as well the communists' ties to the Allies. His book, *Shanghai Conspiracy*, described how Richard Sorge, a German communist in Hitler's embassy in Tokyo, provided extensive information to the Soviets immediately prior to Pearl Harbor.⁴⁰ Upon his return to the United States in 1951, Willoughby testified before Congress about American contacts within Sorge's communist spy ring. After

Willoughby retired he continued his anti-communist activities by supporting organizations and writing articles for publication.⁴¹

Willoughby equated Chinese national interests with a greater communist threat even before the outbreak of the Second World War. He wrote in 1935, “The advent of Sun Yat Sen brought on an ideological renaissance and the possibility of national unity [in China]; but within this ideology lurked the menace of communism and Soviet influence was steadily active.”⁴² This monolithic view demonstrates how his anticommunist bias led him into the trap of mirror imaging, as Willoughby addressed the ramifications of Chinese nationalism as influenced by Soviet communism. Willoughby did not identify that Chinese national interests, interpreted in the vision of Mao’s communist regime, differed from Moscow’s strategic objectives.

Willoughby’s anti-communist views manifest themselves in his description of the nature of the Chinese threat to Korea. He expressed his monolithic view of Communism by stating, “Behind the Red Chinese, of course, stood the Kremlin, ever alive to its chances of pushing to the warm waters of the Pacific.”⁴³ This view also illustrates a primary example of mirror imaging as Willoughby defined the Chinese threat in terms of his perception of the greater Soviet threat, as opposed to Chinese Communist objectives. In this statement, Willoughby furthered the western perception that the Soviets were driving Mao’s strategic moves.

Willoughby was not alone in viewing the Soviets as the primary threat to United States interests. H.A. DeWeerd wrote: “The Defense Secretary [Johnson] was of the opinion that the risk of becoming involved in a war with Soviet Russia was more importantly considered in June 1950 than the possibility of becoming involved with

China.”⁴⁴ Sharing this sentiment, Secretary of State Acheson recalled during the MacArthur hearings in 1951: “It was strongly felt that unless the Soviet Union had decided to precipitate a global war, Chinese intervention in Korea was improbable.”⁴⁵ Acheson’s statement reinforces the primacy of Soviet intent in discussions over the nature of the war in Korea.

At the onset of the war, the Joint Chiefs focused on the global ramifications of Soviet sponsorship of the new Korean War. Official historian James Schnabel cites a July 13 report that stated “It is now apparent from Korea that Russia is embarking upon an entirely new phase in her program of world-wide Communist domination.” This new phase characterized the Soviet client states imposing their will militarily on neighboring countries.⁴⁶

Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, specifically asked General MacArthur during the Wake Conference for his opinion on China’s threats to enter the Korean War. MacArthur commented on Chinese options with the caveat that it must include Soviet support. When asked whether the Chinese would declare war, MacArthur responded “he did not believe that Peiping would declare war on the United States without assurances of Russian support, that they would not declare war as a gesture, and that we should treat any such declaration with utmost seriousness.”⁴⁷ This reinforces the concept that MacArthur understood the implications of a potential PLA intervention as early as mid-October.⁴⁸

One of Willoughby’s most glaring faults was that he saw the Chinese people as being an inferior fighting force. He likely developed this bias through his observations of Chinese combat performance in the Sino-Japanese War extending through the conclusion

of the Second World War. His opinion of the Chinese ability to fight developed in his study of the Sino-Japanese War while he was an instructor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Willoughby's book, *Maneuver in War*, highlights multiple examples where numerically inferior Japanese forces defeated massed Chinese armies. In describing operations encompassing the cities of Shanghai and Nanking, he remarks how the Japanese used joint army and navy operations to soundly defeat the quantitatively superior Chinese defenders. Willoughby carefully detailed how the Japanese used operational maneuver to defeat the Chinese forces that were nearly three times greater in overall man power.⁴⁹ This likely made a deep impression upon Willoughby as he faced the prospect of fighting the Chinese in 1950.

Willoughby did acknowledge that the Chinese were able to successfully cut Japanese lines of communication during their counter-offensive at Tayerchwang in April, 1938, albeit only when they massed to a ratio of 6 to 1 over their opponents. Despite initial losses, the Japanese were able to stabilize the front and prevent a decisive Chinese victory. In this light, Willoughby acknowledged the importance of quality over quantity when fighting the Chinese:

The Japanese were still confronted by superior numbers, an unsatisfactory ratio that prevailed throughout this war, and a tell all index of the efficacy of troops [The Japanese] with adequate modern equipment over improvised organizations [Chinese forces].⁵⁰

Willoughby identified the ability of a commander to utilize bold forms of maneuver to succeed in the face of a much larger enemy force. In describing the Japanese counter-offensive at Hsuchou in May, 1938, he comments that while Japanese troops were outnumbered 5:1 by the Chinese, they were still able to use maneuver to

outflank their opponents and force them to withdraw.⁵¹ In the case of the UN Command in November, 1950, the Chinese possessed the numerical advantage as well as maneuverability, as the PLA forces were not tied to roads and routinely used difficult terrain to outflank MacArthur's troops. These observations played directly into Willoughby's analysis of the problem set facing the UN forces in North Korea in late 1950. The U.S. Army and Marines played the role of the numerically inferior Japanese, albeit with "adequate modern equipment" while the large Chinese formations massing in Manchuria represented an army that could be beaten by a qualitatively superior force.

The U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, John Muccio, noted that Willoughby did not hold the Chinese people in high regard:

General Willoughby had a disdain of the capabilities of the Chinese, of all classes, and his appraisal of Chinese capabilities was based on the little that he knew about China years prior to the advent of the Communists.⁵²

Willoughby formed his impressions of the Chinese ability to wage war even before he had any personal experience in the Pacific theater. This prejudice served to form the basis of his faulty judgment in the fall of 1950 when assessing the veracity of Chinese Communist threats to enter the Korean War.

Willoughby blames Washington in his post war book, *MacArthur, 1941-1951*, for failing to determine the Chinese Communist intent: "Military-political research dealing with the intentions of a foreign nation normally was handled by the State Department or the Central Intelligence Agency."⁵³ MacArthur testified before Congress "In November, our Central Intelligence Agency here said that they felt that there was little chance of any major intervention on the part of Chinese forces."⁵⁴ In this testimony, MacArthur blames the agency that he and Willoughby deliberately kept at arm's length. The reporting that

he did receive on October 12, 1950, from the CIA reflected his own headquarters' analysis that the opportune window of time for the Chinese to intervene in Korea had passed.

Willoughby makes the case in *MacArthur* that his intelligence reports should have triggered responses in Washington or the United Nations to counter the Chinese Communist threats. He derided them for not concluding that the Chinese would actually intervene.⁵⁵ This took considerable hubris, considering that it came from the senior intelligence officer who had described official Chinese statements of their intent to fight in Korea as "political blackmail."

Acknowledging China's verbal threats to the UN Forces not to enter North Korea and the overt Chinese buildup in Manchuria, Willoughby assessed that the Truman administration was at fault for not deterring the Chinese Communists:

The Korean War would have terminated if the U.S. had issued a warning to the effect that any entry of the Chinese Communists into Korea would be considered an act of hostility . . . Instead-through a weak policy and for fear of Russian intervention-information must have been relayed to the other side, guaranteeing that those bridges would enjoy sanctuary and their bases left intact.⁵⁶

Willoughby's focus on the Yalu bridges provides further evidence of mirror imaging by placing the American's reliance on fixed infrastructure to move large military formations. While the United States Army was often road bound in the rugged Korean terrain, the Communist forces often used hastily built river crossing sites and mountainous terrain to gain a positional advantage.

In *MacArthur*, Willoughby described his commander in conflict with the Joint Chiefs of Staff when trying to gather forces for Inchon, "His plan was opposed by powerful military influences in Washington." This was followed by an accusation that

Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, had declared that amphibious operations were outdated tactics and commenting: “Apparently the top brass had forgotten the lessons of military history.”⁵⁷ Willoughby adds a further swipe at one of MacArthur’s least favorite officers, General Lawton Collins, the Army Chief of Staff: “General Collins’ failure to grasp the significance of the plan and the means of practical effectuation thereof marked his stature and his capacity to meet the real problems facing the Commander-in-Chief (MacArthur) in the field.”⁵⁸ The friction between MacArthur and Collins was much more than a difference in opinion over tactics. Major General Ned Almond recalled that Collins was exasperated when MacArthur informed him that Almond would be the X Corps commander. Normally an appointment of that importance required the Army Chief of Staff’s acknowledgement.⁵⁹ Only MacArthur’s eminent seniority and clout enabled him to make such a move without Collins’ prior approval.

Willoughby blamed Truman’s decision to place the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait for allowing the Chinese Communists to move troops from the coastal region to Manchuria. While this statement is accurate, Willoughby asserted that it was decisive in the Chinese decision making process that led to their intervention: “This release of the two great Red Chinese armies assigned to the coastal defense of central China and made them available for transfer elsewhere . . . It was undoubtedly this concept of sanctuary immunity which tipped the scales in Red China’s future decisions.”⁶⁰ Willoughby absolved himself of the responsibility for conducting the analysis of the Chinese movement of forces to the Manchurian border by blaming the CIA for failing to determine China’s ultimate objectives in Korea.

Willoughby further laid blame for the Chinese intervention on the failure of diplomacy and a greater communist agenda. He cited his warning in the form of a Daily Intelligence Summary dated August 27, of Chinese Communist plans to send forces to Korea. Nowhere in this volume does Willoughby discuss his analysis in the second week of October that overt Chinese threats were merely rhetoric. He provided a synopsis of key reporting that appears to indicate that MacArthur's headquarters fully warned Washington of the growing Chinese threat. Citing multiple reports from July through October, Willoughby attempted to claim that Washington was fully informed of Chinese activities. While Willoughby's descriptions of the Chinese troop movements to Manchuria are arguably accurate, he conspicuously left out his repeated assessment that the PLA would not intervene because the opportune time for them to do so had passed and that the Communists' public warnings constituted a strategic bluff.

Willoughby directed more blame for his inability to identify the Chinese intervention, despite his confirmed analysis that hundreds of thousands of PLA troops were massing in Manchuria: "To determine if the Red hordes were on the move or not, by day or night, was made impossible by Truman's own suicidal orders that kept our planes twenty miles south of the river border."⁶¹ Willoughby contradicted himself in regards to the ability of the command to conduct aerial reconnaissance of the border region citing MacArthur's personal flight along the length of the Chinese border and describing it a significant feat in an area where "as many as seventy MiGs had been occasionally sighted. The very audacity of the flight was perhaps what saved him."⁶² In heaping this lavish praise upon his commander, he apparently did not stop to think about who might have been flying the jet fighters that posed such a threat.

In his recollection of MacArthur's assurances to the President that he did not believe the Chinese would intervene in Korea, Willoughby cited a lack of any reporting from the State Department and the CIA.⁶³ This statement is accurate, yet the reports that he did receive reflected Willoughby's own analysis as a result of his efforts to ensure that the only intelligence available in Washington came from his sources. Any CIA reporting that MacArthur would have been able to rely upon reflected his own G2's analysis because it was the primary source of CIA's assessments.

Charles Willoughby's unique background as a German-American combined with his extensive interaction and support for fascist leaders and virulent anti-communist views had an incredible influence upon his performance as MacArthur's senior intelligence officer. Willoughby developed a disdain for the Chinese abilities at a critical period in his career, which further influenced his analysis in 1950. These factors, combined with his unwavering support for MacArthur and his plans in Korea, directly led to the near destruction of the United Nations Command.

¹Charles A. Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 388.

²Benedict K Zobrist, *Oral History Interview with Col. Laurence H. Bunker, Chief aide to General MacArthur, 1946-1952* (December 14, 1976).

³David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 379.

⁴Richard D. McKinzie, *Oral History Interview with Paul H. Nitze* (June 17, 1975).

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶William Manchester, *American Caesar* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1978), 184.

⁷Jerald L. Hill and William D. Stilley, *Oral History Interview with Dr. Wallace H. Graham* (January 10, 1976).

⁸Frank Kluckhohn, "Heidelberg to Madrid - The Story of General Willoughby," *The Reporter*, August 19, 1952, 3.

⁹John Simkin, *Spartacus Educational*, December 16, 2003, <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/JFKwilloughbyC.htm> (accessed January 13, 2009).

¹⁰Jaclyn Campbell, "Gettysburg College," *The Papers of the Major General Charles A. Willoughby*, July 1, 2001, <http://www.gettysburg.edu/dotAsset/404473.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2008).

¹¹Kluckhohn, " The Story of General Willoughby."

¹²Simkin, *Spartacus Educational*.

¹³Michael Robert Patterson, "Arlington Cemetery.net." *Charles Andrew Willoughby Biography*, December 14, 2004, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/cawilloughby.htm> (accessed December 1, 2008).

¹⁴Campbell, *The Papers of the Major General Charles A. Willoughby*.

¹⁵Kluckhohn, "*The Story of General Willoughby*," 4.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷Charles A. Willoughby, *A Brief History of the G2 Section, GHQ, SWPA and Affiliated Units*, Organizational History Report (Tokyo, Japan: GHQ Far East Command, 1948), 2.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 3

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Kluckhohn, "*The Story of General Willoughby*," 8.

²¹D. Clayton James, *Oral Reminiscences of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond* Anniston, Alabama (August 4, 1971), 23.

David Halberstam frequently cites Almond as another key player in ensuring that MacArthur was surrounded by an inner circle of intensely loyal and supportive officers.

²²D. Clayton James, *Oral Reminiscences of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond*, 24.

²³*Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴Simkin, *Spartacus Educational*.

²⁵Charles A. Willoughby, *Maneuver in War* (Harrisburg: The Military Service Publishing Co., 1939), 173.

²⁶Kluckhohn, “*The Story of General Willoughby*,” 3-4.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸Campbell, *The Papers of the Major General Charles A. Willoughby*.

²⁹A rare exception to this was Major General Ned Almond who commanded a division in Europe. Almond was not considered an outcast, likely due to his division’s poor performance and his extensive efforts to intense loyalty to MacArthur while serving as the FEC Chief of Staff.

³⁰Manchester, *American Caesar*, 427.

³¹Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Omar Bradley and Army Chief of Staff, General Lawton Collins commanded with distinction in the European theater during World War II. Despite the fact that General “Lightning Joe” Collins started the war as a division commander in the Pacific, MacArthur and his close associates continued to view him as an outsider.

³²Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 27.

³³Benedict K. Zobrist, *Oral History Interview with Col. Laurence H. Bunker, Chief aide to General MacArthur, 1946-1952* (December 14, 1976).

³⁴Kluckhohn, “*The Story of General Willoughby*,” 6.

³⁵Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 391.

³⁶Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History of Ambassador John J. Muccio, Ambassador to Korea, 1949-1952* (February 18, 1971).

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 396.

³⁹Willoughby, *Maneuver in War*, 197.

⁴⁰Kluckhohn, “*The Story of General Willoughby*,” 7.

⁴¹Michael Robert Patterson, “Arlington Cemetery.net.” *Charles Andrew Willoughby Biography*, December 14, 2004, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/cawilloughby.htm> (accessed December 1, 2008), 16.

⁴²Willoughby, *Maneuver in War*, 198.

- ⁴³Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 379.
- ⁴⁴H.A. DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise in the Korean War* (Point Paper, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1962), 19.
- ⁴⁵DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise*, 23.
- ⁴⁶James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 104.
- ⁴⁷Dean Rusk, "Wake Island Meeting," *Truman Library*, October 15, 1950, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/wake/Wi196_1.htm (accessed November 11, 2008), 2.
- ⁴⁸Ironically, it was only one day prior that PLA troops began their infiltration across the Yalu into North Korea.
- ⁴⁹Willoughby, *Maneuver in War*, 206-207.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 211.
- ⁵¹*Ibid.*, 212.
- ⁵²Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History of Ambassador John J. Muccio, Ambassador to Korea, 1949-1952* (February 18, 1971).
- ⁵³Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 387.
- ⁵⁴H.A. DeWeerd, *Strategic Surprise in the Korean War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1962), 29.
- ⁵⁵Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 396.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 403.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 366.
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 367.
- ⁵⁹D. Clayton James, *Oral Reminiscences of Lieutenant General Edward M. Almond* (Anniston, Alabama, August 4, 1971), 18.
- ⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 378.
- ⁶¹Willoughby, *MacArthur*, 382.

⁶²Ibid., 390.

⁶³Ibid., 383.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Why did they[PLA] fail to come to the assistance of the North Koreans immediately? For the simple reason that after Inchon, they had to face the probability that the Yalu bridges and their adjacent bases would have been bombed, which would have jeopardized successful intervention.¹

— Willoughby justifies his assessment that the PLA would not have entered Korea had President Truman authorized airstrikes in Manchuria.

Charles Willoughby correctly identified the potential threat of a Chinese Communist intervention in Korea in late 1950, yet failed to acknowledge the significance of China's strategic warnings, operational preparations for war and tactical confirmation of their intentions. Willoughby's flawed assessment of Chinese intentions in the fall of 1950 was a result of rampant mirror imaging, complicated by circular analysis stemming from his exclusive control over intelligence reporting on the Korean theater. His personal prejudices against the Chinese ability to fight exacerbated this problem. Once the United Nations Command undeniably confirmed that Chinese forces had entered North Korea, he minimized their significance in order to support General Douglas MacArthur's final offensive to the Yalu River in late November.

Several other factors profoundly compounded Willoughby's failings. These factors included MacArthur's and Washington's perceptions that the Korean War was in its final stages, resulting in increased pressure to move forces to meet the Soviet threat in Europe. MacArthur also fervently believed that he could defeat any Chinese intervention with airpower, often using this argument to assuage concerns from those who questioned Willoughby's assessment of Chinese intentions. The President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff failed in their duty to guide the theater commander in their reluctance to challenge

MacArthur's plans following the successful Inchon landings, even in the face of overt Chinese threats to intervene. Each of these factors has relevance to contemporary security challenges that the United States faces today and will likely face in the future.

Charles Willoughby frequently fell victim to mirror imaging in misidentifying the Chinese decisive point² for entering into the war. "Mirror Imaging" is a concept wherein analysts inadvertently base their assessments on how the analysts themselves would act as opposed to taking the point of view of the enemy. Willoughby believed that if China were to intervene, it would do so when the UN forces were most vulnerable as opposed to waiting until entering into the conflict was most advantageous to the Chinese. Mao's delay also provided the Chinese a plausible argument that MacArthur's advance towards the Yalu threatened China's national security. Believing that the decisive points for the UN forces occurred during the defense of the Pusan Perimeter and the landings at Inchon, Willoughby failed to realize that by allowing MacArthur to extend his lines of communication and separate his forces in the frozen mountains of North Korea, the People's Liberation Army could gain a marked advantage over their enemies.

Willoughby demonstrated his use of mirror imaging by using UN air power as a determinant for China's decision to enter the Korean War, as opposed to assessing Chinese objectives. When answering the question of why the Chinese did not attack when Willoughby and MacArthur thought the UN forces were most vulnerable, Willoughby responded: "For the simple reason that after Inchon, they had to face the probability that the Yalu bridges and their adjacent bases would be bombed, which would have jeopardized successful intervention."³ Subsequent interrogations of PLA prisoners

revealed that Mao's forces used hastily built wooden bridges or forded the Yalu River at its most shallow points.⁴

The concept of mirror imaging continues to plague the U.S. intelligence community even in the modern era of advanced technology. The United States and most of the world's intelligence organizations misidentified the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenal in the years leading to the U.S. led invasion in 2003. The west assumed Saddam Hussein would maintain his WMD program due to his previous history and a lack of competing hypotheses. Saddam's adamant refusal to allow UN inspectors complete access to suspected WMD reinforced western opinions that he was concealing an illicit weapons program. By personally establishing himself as the primary conduit through which virtually all intelligence regarding Korea had to pass, Willoughby prevented the Central Intelligence Agency and other organizations from developing alternative assessments of Chinese intentions. The Far East Command Headquarters environment facilitated Willoughby's desire to control information as well as to isolate those officers who might have spoken out against MacArthur's plans. In *MacArthur, 1941-1951*, Willoughby exposes the competitive resentment between General MacArthur's command and that of his perceived vision of the European Campaign during World War II. "We fought harder in Korea than in Europe, and given the circumstances, just as successfully."⁵ In this statement, Willoughby reveals the primary source of hostility between MacArthur, his inner circle, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, primarily made up of general officers who had served in the European theater. Willoughby thwarted efforts by the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency to coordinate intelligence operations, replicating his role in keeping the CIA's predecessor, the OSS, from

operating in the Pacific region during World War II fueled by his resentment of the agency's Euro-centric focus.

Operation Chromite's success effectively insulated MacArthur and his staff from scrutiny, enabling them to continue across the 38th Parallel into North Korea and to advance to the Chinese border despite overt Chinese threats not to do so and knowledge that Mao was significantly increasing his preparations for war in Manchuria. At the strategic level, neither President Truman nor his most senior policy advisors provided a clear objective for the political end state for the war.

Willoughby's motivation for deliberately dismissing the Chinese Communist threat in mid-October 1950 lies in his unwavering support for General MacArthur. In 1975, Paul Nitze, of the State Department's Policy Planning section, described, Washington's view of reporting of discussions between the Spanish Ambassador to Japan and MacArthur:

From those communications it was perfectly clear that what MacArthur had in mind was that either he would have a complete victory in North Korea or, if the Chinese Communists got involved, then the war would be spread to the Chinese mainland as a whole and the object of the game would then be the unseating of Mao Tse tung and the restoration of Chaing Kai Shek.⁶

Willoughby may have deliberately supported a MacArthur agenda to bring China into the Korean War. David Halberstam wrote that signal intercepts in 1950 unveiled communications from the Spanish and Portuguese missions in Tokyo to their governments that MacArthur planned to expand the Korean War in order to draw in the Chinese. Willoughby's close ties to the Spanish dictator Franco raises a distinct possibility that he was directly involved in back channel communications between MacArthur and those nations.⁷ His extreme right wing views and virulent anti-

communism solidified him within MacArthur's inner circle and likely influenced the Far East Commander's judgment to continue to execute his final offensive.

This theory may be further supported by the fact that in the face of mounting indications that the Chinese would intervene in October and November 1950, MacArthur and his staff remained hostile to the evidence. H.A. DeWeerd wrote "This hostility stemmed from the knowledge that to credit this intelligence would have forced an entirely different kind of campaign upon the United Nations command."⁸ MacArthur intended to unify the Korean Peninsula with his November offensive. Any other course of action would have significantly delayed those plans.

MacArthur acknowledged in the first weeks of the Korean War that any major involvement by the Soviets or China in the conflict would significantly alter the course of the war. James Schnabel wrote that MacArthur informed General Collins of his concept for the Inchon landings in early July, but also told him that "If Russia or Communist China intervened in force, the plans would have to be changed."⁹ In this statement, MacArthur clearly understood the nature of the Korean War could dramatically shift. After the success of Operation Chromite and the disintegration of the NKPA north of the 38th Parallel, MacArthur and Willoughby would have been well advised to remember these words.

By the end of the first week of November, MacArthur recognized that the PLA had crossed into Korea and in several cases engaged UN forces in division level engagements. Increasing pressure from the Joint Chiefs to reconsider his objectives in Korea likely hastened MacArthur's decision to initiate his final push to the Yalu. On November 9, MacArthur told the Joint Chiefs that any course of action other than

attacking to the Yalu would “be fatal to weaken the fundamental and basic policy of the United Nations to destroy all resisting armed forces in Korea and bring that country into a united and free nation.” As he had promised Truman on Wake Island, he mitigated the PLA threat by relying on air interdiction to disrupt the Chinese infiltration. This assumption was in order to enable his forces to complete the destruction of the North Korean Army and any PLA forces already in Korea.¹⁰ Any option short of completely removing communist forces from the North was akin to appeasement in MacArthur’s view. Charles Willoughby undoubtedly shared this opinion. MacArthur’s message to the UN on November 24, 1950, indicated his desire to quickly finish the war by completing the advance to the Yalu:

Our losses were extraordinarily light; the logistics situation is geared to sustain offensive operations. The justice of our cause and promise of an early completion of our mission is reflected in the morale of the troops and commanders alike.¹¹

In his post-war defense of MacArthur’s actions in Korea, Willoughby’s writing makes claims that multiple sources can refute. He openly lied about MacArthur’s pledge at the Wake Conference to rapidly withdraw U.S. forces in Korea after the conclusion of hostilities. He described MacArthur’s statement at Wake that he would “send two divisions back and to get the boys home for Christmas,” as a “quip.” This statement is belied by the Far East Command’s publication of Operation Plan 202 on October 20, which put MacArthur’s statement into action.¹²

Willoughby’s control over the Far East Command Daily Intelligence Summaries placed disproportionate personal influence over the assessments. This personal influence allowed Willoughby’s preconceived judgments of the Chinese, as well as his desire to support MacArthur, to directly influence the information that the CIA and the Pentagon

would use to develop their own analysis. Technological advances, such as collaborative analytical tools, web based information sharing and improved interagency cooperation may serve to prevent any one individual, such as Willoughby, from having undue influence over intelligence analysis in the future.

Despite the intelligence community's deliberate efforts to include multiple perspectives from interagency analysts, failures still occur. The 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) titled "Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction" included input from multiple agencies as well as dissenting opinions.¹³ This NIE incorrectly concluded that Saddam Hussein was continuing to develop WMD programs, providing one of the Bush Administration's primary justifications for invading Iraq in 2003. As with MacArthur's decision to continue to advance to the Yalu in November, 1950, political motivations and wishful thinking may have trumped sound intelligence assessments and military judgment.

The United States repeatedly demonstrates a tendency to prematurely assume that its conflicts are complete before achieving decisive victory. As a result of consultations with Bradley on Wake Island, MacArthur made plans to redeploy the Eighth Army to Japan by Christmas and to ship a division to Europe.¹⁴ United States' doctrine mandates that "Intelligence drives Operations,"¹⁵ but in the case of Korea and other recent missions, the commander's intuition often trumped the intelligence officer's estimates. MacArthur's desire to destroy the North Korean army and to unify the Korean peninsula under the control of the UN forces and the South Korean government blinded him to the consequences of a potential Chinese intervention.¹⁶ As with mirror imaging, this concept the U.S. tendency to declare victory prematurely also exists in the Global War on Terror.

Operation Enduring Freedom's initial rapid success in conducting regime change in Afghanistan in 2001 significantly lowered expectations for resistance to a similar policy towards Iraq in 2003. In current events, there are many leaders in the military and civilian government who are making a plea that because a surge worked in Iraq another surge will work in Afghanistan. Leaders must carefully analyze the ramifications of any major military operation, for the circumstances that lead to one successful operation never exactly replicate in another.

The United States' experience in Iraq demonstrates multiple instances where senior leaders have concluded prematurely that strategic objectives were met. The politically-directed cease fire which ended the Persian Gulf War in 1991 resulted in the escape of large elements of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard. With two U.S. corps within striking distance of the Republican Guard's remaining forces, President George H.W. Bush directed his commanders to cease operations.¹⁷

In the spring of 2003, President George W. Bush landed on a U.S. aircraft carrier returning home from Operation Iraqi Freedom that prominently displayed a "Mission Accomplished" banner behind him. Regardless of the intent behind the placement of that banner the symbolism was clear: American forces were victorious in Iraq and the war was all but over. The 2008 election campaign found the issue of when to redeploy U.S. forces from Iraq at the forefront of debates within and between both major political parties. As U.S. forces draw down in Iraq in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement, senior policy makers must not become complacent and ignore the residual points of conflict in that country. Likewise, the increased focus on war in Afghanistan

must take into account the perspective of vital parties in the region, to include Pakistan, India, Iran and the central Asian states.

Several areas for further study arise out of this examination of Willoughby, MacArthur and the Chinese intervention in the Korean War. First, what was MacArthur's true intent for the November offensive? Did he deliberately intend to bring China into the war and was Charles Willoughby complicit? If MacArthur did intend on provoking an aggressive Chinese response against the orders of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President, how does this impact his standing as one of the United States Army's most revered leaders?

MacArthur's extremely powerful position as the commander of the U.S. Far East Command also brings into question the role of Goldwater-Nichols era Combatant Commanders in politics and international relations. T.R. Fehrenbach addressed the significance of military commanders operating beyond the wishes of their political masters:

Because Washington permitted soldiers to make and act on decisions that were beyond the purview of the military, because it forced them to bring purely military thinking into matters that remained in essence political . . . because Washington sometimes acted as if there could be a separation between war and politics.¹⁸

This statement reinforces the necessity for Washington to provide guidance to the Combatant Commanders and ensure that those military leaders are synchronized with U.S. policy objectives in their respective regions. The wide scope of responsibilities and authority placed in the hands of the Combatant Commanders does not have an equal counterweight in the Department of State or other government entity.

Willoughby's long tenure and influence on MacArthur's staff brings into question whether or not current personnel practices could provide senior officers the ability to build similar organizations that could isolate them from external influences. Joint personnel management systems must prevent cronyism in professional staffs in order to ensure that any one senior commander does not surround himself with career sycophants and yes men. Likewise, senior leaders must develop command environments that encourage constructive professional debates over policy and aggressively seek out dissenting opinions and clearly understand the reasons for their differences.

The lessons learned from the UN Command's defeat in North Korea in November 1950 can directly apply to today by studying how Major General Charles A. Willoughby failed in his duty to accurately predict the enemy's course of action. Mirror imaging, commander's influence, success driving future operations, and the United States' tendency for prematurely declaring victory is evident in the Korea campaign as well as in contemporary operations. These concepts manifest themselves in intelligence bias, operational objectives driving missions and premature declarations of victory that produce operational and strategic setbacks.

¹Charles A. Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 402.

²Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, defines Decisive Point as: A geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a *marked advantage* over an adversary or contribute materially to achieving success.

³Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951*, 402.

⁴HQ, EUSAK G-2, 164th Military Intelligence Service Detachment, "Preliminary Interrogation of Prisoner of War #164-MISDI-0001," October 25, 1950; "Prisoner of War Preliminary Interrogation Report #164-MISD-1177," November 2, 1950; "Prisoner of

War Preliminary Interrogation Report #164-MISDI-1179,” November 2, 1950; “Prisoner of War Preliminary Interrogation Report #164-MISDI-1178,” November 2, 1950; “Prisoner of War Reinterrogation Report #164-MISDI-1165,” October 26, 1950.

⁵Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951*, 403.

⁶Richard D. McKinzie, *Oral History Interview with Paul H. Nitze* (June 17, 1975).

⁷David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 602.

⁸DeWeerd, H.A, *Strategic Surprise in the Korean War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1962), 35.

⁹James F. Schnabel, *The United States Army in The Korean War: Policy and Direction: The First Year* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1972), 108.

¹⁰Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*, 251.

¹¹DeWeerd, H.A. *Strategic Surprise in the Korean War*, 28.

¹²Willoughby, *MacArthur, 1941-1951*, 398.

¹³Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, “Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on Postwar Findings about Iraq's WMD programs and links to terrorism and how they compare with prewar assessments,” September 8, 2006, <http://intelligence.senate.gov/phaseiiaccuracy.pdf> (accessed February 12, 2009).

¹⁴Schnabel, *Policy and Direction*.

¹⁵United States Army, *FM 2-0 Intelligence* (United States Army, 2008), 1-18.

¹⁶Trumbull Higgins, *Korea and the Fall of MacArthur* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

¹⁷Steven A. Bourque, *JAYHAWK! The VII Corps in The Persian Gulf War* (Washington, DC: United States Army, 2002), 397.

¹⁸T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (Washington: Brassey's, 1963).

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